

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

Vol. XVIII

JANUARY, 1906

No. 1

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

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SMART SET ADVERTISER

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THE OUTSIDER

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

WHEN Felippo had concluded his covenant with the stranger and had watched him slowly, it would seem reluctantly, move away from the place and down the road to where Pedente awaited him with the dusty carriage of hire, he turned and rejoined Maria, who was standing behind him in the open doorway. Maria was not as young as once she was, nor as beautiful. Felippo could remember the time when the sight of her, poised lazily on one hip, one arm behind her head and her chin tilted so, would have made him hear bells in his ears. Now she had fifty years, and he could pass and repass her without a catch of the breath. It was strange! Maria was thinking as he came toward her that since Felippo had succumbed to rheumatism and middle age, no one would recognize in him the brown-eyed, laughing-mouthed whirlwind that had swept her into his arms on St. Joseph day and almost carried her off to church to be married.

Still, it was pleasant and comfortable, this life of theirs, with nothing to do but every week to unlock the villa and the pavilion, and lock them again, and to leave candles on the altar of the good Maria of the Olive Branch to obtain forgiveness for their elaborate pretense of having swept and dusted as well. And every six months came the infallible cheque from England, and went back their own acknowledgment and assurance of their care of the place. Sometimes imagination led them so far afield in their description of their faithful labors that the good Maria of the Olive Branch smiled for a week after in the midst of a forest of candles.

Felippo sat down and drew off his cap. Maria shifted to the other foot. "Well, 'Lippo?"

"He comes," replied her husband shortly.

Maria sighed. "I wish I had cleaned the pavilion oftener," she said. "The dust must be as thick as my finger."

"You will be well paid," grunted Felippo.

"Yes, that is true."

'Lippo fanned himself slowly with the cap. "The signor wishes to come at once—in three days."

"Jesu, Maria, three days, and the dust as thick as my finger!" She sighed, and folded her arms lazily. "What does he wish when he is here?"

"Nothing—he brings his own servant with him. We shall have nothing to do for him."

"And what does he pay?"

'Lippo slipped his hand into his pocket and drew out six glittering coins. "In advance," he said briefly, "for this month." Maria's eyes shone. There were two other bright coins in 'Lippo's pocket, but a man must arrange these things. It is his dignity.

Maria settled herself a little against the doorway. "In ten days comes the letter from England," she said.

"Truly," rejoined Felippo.

"It is nothing," said Maria. "We shall have to buy only six candles for the blessed Lady of the Olive Branch, since what we say of the cleanness of the pavilion will at least be true!"

"Truly," he replied again. There was a silence. "Dusting is woman's work," said Felippo.

"I am thinking," said the woman,

"if just at this time someone from England should come and find——"

There was a long pause; it would have been a silence had not the man jingled the money in his hand with a ruminative absent-mindedness. Perhaps they were both wondering just what punishment it would entail, their having let the pavilion of the villa of the Gransignor Bannistair to a stranger who paid a month's rent to them in advance.

Felippo poured the coins into the cap and tossed them lightly. "Six candles will not be enough," he said cheerfully. "We are miserable sinners."

"What is the signor's name?" inquired Maria. She drew the door of the pavilion close behind her, and turned the key without altering her indolent pose. 'Lippo rose, on hearing the sound, and put the price of his trust into his pocket.

"His name?" He shrugged his shoulders. "What can I know? He is American."

In three days, after much complaining on the part of Maria, much easy encouragement from 'Lippo, and the dust of an army's tread from the windows of the pavilion, some sort of order began to reign in the little house. And it would seem, from the beautiful sky that blessed it, the day of the stranger's arrival was not frowned upon by the Lady of Heaven, but that he was smilingly welcomed and that the offer of candles of which he was the unconscious impulse was benignantly received.

The stranger himself—whose name, though 'Lippo found it unpronounceable, was the not remarkable name of Mitchell—was quite unaware of the nature of his lease of the pavilion and took possession without the slightest suspicion of the wax tapers that on the altar of the good Maria of the Olive Branch were doing their best to purge and burn away the sinful element in his presence. He arrived, in the more or less shabby public carriage, in the cool of the evening, the only time of day when the drive along the dusty, un-

shaded road would have been endurable. He was flanked and faced with kit-bags, whose age had brought a dowager-like endowment of fat and wrinkles. And on the box beside Pedente sat his servant.

Maria, having emerged from the pavilion at the last moment with the final pan of dust, paused behind Felippo, who was standing, cap in hand, the smiling, bowing image of welcome, and peeped over his shoulder. "Jesu, Maria," she cried in soft excitement, "one would say the man inside was the servant and the servant the signor!"

"Be still, thou!" growled 'Lippo amiably, looking again to see what she meant. Surely it was true the man sitting beside their friend Pedente had a grave, superior dignity that was utterly wanting in the rather negligent ease of the signor who sat amid his luggage. The man on the box had gray hair and slight side-whiskers, and he frowned impartially at all seasons and persons. He was tall and rather thin and bore himself with an unbending rigidity. The signor himself—'Lippo whispered to Maria not to be a fool; had he not come himself to see the place, was he not of course the signor?—was tall, too, but not so thin and not at all so imperious and haughty. His clothes hung about him loosely, his knees were crossed, his hat lay beside him, he was smoking a cigarette, and his face was genial, calm, almost smiling, utterly without the icy repulsion of his superior valet. He got out, with a friendly nod to 'Lippo and to the visible upper half of Maria's eyes, and then in the very act of walking toward the house, paused, stopped and surveyed the place with a deliberateness that few Americans possess.

"I am glad I dusted so thoroughly," whispered Maria, twitching at her invisible but dirty apron. "How clean he looks, 'Lippo!"

"As a new pan," said 'Lippo, nodding.

"Do you suppose the other washes him?"

'Lippo did not reply to her question.

He had, with a sudden anxious twitch of his eyebrow, gone forward to the signor's elbow. "You do not find, signor? The place is not—?"

The Signor Mitchell drew a deep sigh through his cigarette, and cast it away. "I find the place—perfect," he said, almost softly, and 'Lippo's inverted frown vanished in satisfaction. He turned almost complacently to the summons of the gray, stiff personage who was calling him to look alive and help a bit with the luggage. Maria had disappeared when her sheltering lord had forsaken her, and when Gilbert and Felippo slowly and painfully struggled their way indoors laden with the plethoric kit-bags, and the ancient Pedente with an almost breathless gasp of gratitude for the sum which had been carelessly dropped into his brown hand drove swiftly back to town to spend a part thereof, the Signor Mitchell was left alone in the garden.

It seemed as if the Signor Mitchell could scarcely see the place deeply enough. He seemed to be trying to "take it in" more poignantly, the almost classic beauty of the pale stucco of the pavilion outlined in cameo clearness against the thick standing trees at one side, and the ineffable sapphire of the evening sky at the other. Near him at the left the path swerved in a great circle, and then dropped in a flight of wide, shallow steps into the lower garden. He abandoned his progress toward the pavilion, and went slowly along this path to stand at the stone balustrade, so badly battered and broken, and look down across the sunken parterre with its dry fountain and tangle of weedy verdure, across the terraces and stairways that at the farther side rose in a charmingly inconsequential ascension to the great villa itself.

It was indeed, in the dimming twilight of the warm, sweet day, a place to rouse the imagination of the least fanciful. The very silence and neglect of the place drew one's thoughts irresistibly to the romantic glamour of its days of merriment and luxury, as an old fan long laid away will breathe

faint perfumes and melodies of the dances where it fluttered supreme, a provocative barrier for my lady's lips and eyes, and a yellowing ruffle of lace will revive the whole life story of the gallant gentleman whose hand knew sword as well.

Mitchell leaned his arms upon the stone coping and watched the shadows deepen in the garden below. He was too far from the pavilion to be reached by even the shrillest tones of 'Lippo's explanatory talk with Gilbert, as they made the tour of the place together. He was quite undisturbed, quite alone. It was all ideal. He was glad of what he had done—he would be alone and lazy and achieve his nearly completed convalescence. The garden would be a sweet, silent nurse, save when the birds sang, and they would just fill the measure of a man's need of companionship. He would wander about and explore. Perhaps under the overgrown fertility there yet lived a flower or so of the old centuries, when, he was sure, the place had blossomed like Endymion's bed. There would be—he could see the ghostly shapes of them now among the shrubs—grotesque and quaint plinths, perhaps the ubiquitous sun-dial, a Diana or a more naked Venus, other fountains perhaps, other terraces. He broke off suddenly in his dreamy meditation. Opposite him, on the stone stair of the rising terrace, there stood a woman, a woman of a gracious presence whose white, rare draperies fell about her feet in pretty dignity as she moved slowly down into the garden. About her head and shoulders a white scarf was twisted, a tissue so gossamer that where the faint stirring air lifted it, it seemed to melt into the atmosphere like mist.

She was totally unconscious of his presence, never lifting her eyes curiously to his stranger figure that had invaded the garden where she so evidently felt at home. With a directness that had no haste and no purpose, she moved slowly down the stair, and crossed the garden to the fountain-side. Here she paused, standing in that perfection of ease so rare among women,

and as she stood so, a strange thing came to him. He could hear, yes, distinctly, he could hear the monotonous, unmistakable splash and curl of water in the basin he had imagined empty. Imagined! Even in the now withdrawing light he could see plainly that the fountain was as dry as the stone on which he leaned. The faint eerie feeling that attacked him at the apparent contradiction passed almost unrecognized. What a curious illusion it was! Gilbert must be drawing water in the pavilion behind him—perhaps prospectively filling him a tub.

And who might the lady be, forsooth? The rascally caretaker of the place had told him it was empty and forsaken, that no one ever came, not even tourists to see the staircase in the villa, though the good Mary knew he expected little enough for unlocking the door and letting them in. She seemed so inexpressibly at home, so content, so accustomed, so much a part of the place—she could not be an infrequent visitor. Would she be vexed at seeing him there? But after all had he not rented the pavilion, and since the villa was not tenanted, should not he be the one to resent the presence of a second person?

She still stood beside the dusty basin and still the sound of bubbling and caressing water came unmistakably to his ears. Then slowly she moved with a grace that held his eye imperiously around the overgrown border at the fountain's rim, until she was directly beneath and before him. There was a marble seat, just here, and the thought flashed to him that she was going to install herself there, and if she did so, almost inevitably she would lift her eyes and see him. He wondered a bit whether he should slip away now, for he did not wish to annoy her. And then his wondering passed into nothingness, and he became aware that his heart was beating from an actual gush of sympathy as he watched her in what she did. With a sidelong movement as full of splendid strength as of grace, she knelt in the great stone bench, swinging her whole

slender body down until her lips touched and kissed the place where a person's head might rest against the back. She did it slowly, with passion and yet with dignity, as natural in the action as she was dramatic. He knew he ought not to be watching her, and yet it seemed as if he could not move. A sense of unreality had descended upon him. The scene, the hour, the woman, all seemed part of a pretty vision.

In the deepening dusk she rose to her feet again, and standing so, tall and with head bent, she unfastened from her dress some kind of adornment or flower, he could not distinguish what, and laid it in the corner of a seat with a touch of proud shyness. Then to his surprise and discomfiture—for he had expected she would return the way she came—she turned her face toward the steps near which he stood and began slowly to mount them. Even in that moment, when he was quite at a loss what to do, when his mind was taken up with instantaneous plans and rejections, he noticed that as she moved away from the basin, the sound of the murmuring water ceased.

He had at the first instant decided to make a bolt for the house. He must avoid meeting her, avoid for her the discomfiture that his unpardonable watching would surely bring. Yet even then he knew it was impossible to reach the pavilion before she gained the top of the steps. He had instinctively drawn back from the balustrade when she had come toward him, and he now for a moment put his head over to see how near she might be. Possibly in the semi-darkness he might remain where he was and not be discovered.

To his speechless, motionless astonishment she was nowhere to be seen.

He continued in this amazement some moments, staring at the bare white steps, at the flat, empty garden, at the terrace. There was not a place where a kitten could in that time have concealed itself. What had become of her? In a bewilderment sufficient to be unrecking of possible

consequences, he stepped boldly out to the head of the stairs, and looked down. Slowly he began to descend them. Surely he had seen her start to mount them. Surely in his movement of indecision she could not have had time to go back and cross the garden and disappear—that, as he neared the bottom step and looked across the court, he could see was physically impossible. He paused there a moment unable to accept the inexplicable testimony of his senses. Could the twilight have played him such a trick—could she have passed him—could she?

He found himself slowly going toward the marble bench, and yielding to an impulse of which he would have been ashamed had he not been carried still farther away by a still greater amazement, he felt along in that part of the wide smooth seat where he had seen her lay her token.

There was nothing there.

Unconsciously, Mitchell put up his hands and rubbed his eyes. After all, good heavens, was he asleep? It couldn't be that his illness—! And yet—

He was not a man with a single nerve in his body that could be distinguished from his muscles and his will power, yet he jumped like a fidgety woman when a voice behind him, above him from the spot where he had been standing so long, hailed him quietly. He turned sharply. But the outline by the broken balustrade was that of a man, and the voice had called him by name. And as soon as he could command his own voice he answered, "Yes, yes, Gilbert, I am coming," and returned above slowly, feeling like a man who wakes from a dream too real to be at once distinguished from reality.

"Now do you think, sir," said Gilbert, with just a respectable amount of severity and reproach in his tones, coming to the top of the steps to meet Mitchell, "that you should be down in that 'ollow and the dew falling?"

"Where is that 'Lippo creature?" demanded Mitchell, paying no heed to the rebuke. "I want to see him."

"He has gone 'ome, sir. I told 'im

to come hover in the morning in case we wanted anything. Your supper is waiting, sir."

"Ah!" replied Mitchell absently. Then, "How long have you been on the terrace here?"

"Just walking hover from the pavilion, sir." Gilbert accented the word pavilion with the precise amount of scorn necessary to suggest his habit of a larger living.

"Did anyone pass you?"

"Pass me? 'Ere, sir? Why, there isn't a blessed creature but ourselves!"

"So I thought," returned Mitchell, with ambiguous obscurity.

They walked on in silence, Gilbert a respectful step or two behind, until they reached the pavilion.

"Have you — er — been drawing water, Gilbert? A tub or anything?" He tried to speak easily, but was conscious of a tremor of interest in his voice. "I thought, a while ago, I heard a noise of moving water."

Had he not been so rigid, Gilbert would have stiffened as he said, "Drawing water, sir? There isn't a pipe of water in the place!"

Involuntarily Mitchell looked back, although from where he stood he could not see the fountain. "Ah, indeed?" he said as absently as before. "How very inconvenient."

II

THE next morning, a delightful-looking person in his white flannels and well-clayed shoes, Mitchell came indolently out from his new quarters and moved across the newly cut grass to where his breakfast-table had been spread, according to his own desire, by the side of the broken balustrade. There was no mail and no morning news at his place. His blessed sense of isolation received an increase as he noticed it. He sat down, and stared into the garden. A good nightful of sleep had not dulled his memory of the late intruder. She had come down the steps, over there, slowly and sweetly, and she had gone to the foun-

tain-side. She wore white and a white veil was wound about her head. He had seen her—he would swear to God he had seen her.

"Do you not wish your fruit, sir?"

Gilbert, with the paraphernalia of coffee-making and a couple of covered dishes on a tray, bent a frowning eye on his master. "Dr. Moulton said you must be made to eat, sir."

"That's very good of Dr. Moulton, on my word," said Mitchell, obediently attacking the berries set before him. "When do you expect that 'Lippo creature?"

"He is 'ere now, waiting to see you, sir."

"Good. Send him out."

"I am afraid you'll not finish your breakfast, sir, if 'e comes hout to talk to you. Being that I won't speak Eytalian, though I understand it well enough, he can't come it hover me much. But they're all gabblers, and he'll myke it hup on you, I'm afraid, sir."

Mitchell laughed. "It's good practice for me, Gilbert. Send him out, and bring the sugar, which you've forgotten." The stratagem proved successful, for, "I begs a thousand pardons," said the man, and hurried off.

Felippo came out, his cap in his hand, and came slowly, not only because the rheumatism was very painful in the morning, but because his guilty conscience was awake, expecting he knew not what discoveries. And yet the good Mother of Heaven might surely—in face of the beautiful candles, and the pink paper flowers—

"Ah, good morning, 'Lippo," said Mitchell pleasantly.

Felippo's anxiety decreased. "A very beautiful morning, signor, thank God. You wished——?"

Mitchell blew out the alcohol lamp and whirled the copper pot around dexterously. The coffee began to drip audibly. "How long have you had charge here, 'Lippo?"

Felippo shrugged his shoulders. "I have had charge of the Villa della Corona ever since the Gransignor

Bannistair bought the place—about nine years—or perhaps ten."

"The villa—I think you said—is empty?"

"Oh, empty, yes, signor. No one comes even to see the staircase, though the Holy Mary knows I expect little enough for showing it. No one has ever been within the doors except my good Maria and myself. The signor desires to go?"

"Ah," said Mitchell slowly. "Well, perhaps. We'll see. Where is the nearest house from here?"

Felippo shrugged again. "My own little house, signor, and near me the good father."

"You live alone, you and your wife?"

"Ourselves and Nunzi."

"Nunzi?"

"The goat, signor."

Mitchell laughed lightly. "I see. And the good priest lives alone? Well, and after his house, what then?"

"The Villa Braccioni, two miles from here."

"Who lives there?"

"No one, signor. The Braccioni are in Rome."

"Two miles," mused Mitchell softly. "And on the other side?"

Felippo raised his hands. "On the other side—the estates of the Gransignor Bannistair for ever so far."

"Untenanted?"

"As empty as the signor's cup."

Mitchell remedied the defect. "You have never seen anyone here—a lady—dressed perhaps in white—who comes perhaps often?"

"Never!" There was no mistaking the certainty of the reply. "The signor is the first person to be here. There is some mistake. The signor has heard? It is some other villa, he may be sure."

Mitchell was silent a moment, stirring his coffee. He was conscious of being glad, glad that the man knew nothing. It would have been stupid and commonplace if he had had a voluble explanation of the woman's presence. He looked up at the patient 'Lippo, intending to dismiss him. But at the moment there came to his

ears, unmistakably, the monotonously murmuring splash and curl of water in the basin of the fountain. He waited an instant, breathless, his eyes on Felippo's face. The man evidently heard nothing. He seemed waiting for Mitchell to say the thing that had lifted his eyes. But Mitchell, after pausing one heart-throbbing moment to compose himself—a man who has been ill is easily interested and excited by trifles—turned very deliberately and looked down into the garden. He scarcely knew what it was that he expected to see, but he was conscious that in the better light of day the revelation was even more amazing than it had been in the dusk of the evening before.

She was there, beside the fountain, in her white dress, with the diaphanous scarf floating from her shoulders into the air. She was bending down, one hand on the basin, one reaching within, and she picked a great white waxy water-flower, and held it near her face to breathe its lily sweetness. But all this was on a par with the previous occasion. What came in the nature of a greater wonder was the presence of her companion, a man rather taller than her own tall self, standing beside her and smiling down at her with a look of unspeakable adoration and tenderness. Mitchell looked at him with poignant curiosity. The man's attitude, standing as he did with his hands thrust heavily into his coat pockets, served to show in bold relief every line of his good young body, the wide iron shoulders, the hips as slender as a young girl's without that fragility, and the long, strong limbs. His head was boyish and charming and he held it well. All this Mitchell had perforce to note quickly, for in another moment the man was partially blotted from sight, as the woman rose again at his side holding up the lily with a childish prettiness for him to smell. The man put his arm about her and drew her close.

Mitchell gave a deep breath and looked back at Felippo. "The fountain is very dry," he said, and his voice trembled.

Felippo nodded. "It is dry, like that, ever since I have been here," he said, and looked down into the garden.

Mitchell watched him breathlessly.

"The place is very desolate, of course," Felippo went on, "but it would need an army of gardeners to keep it in order. And since the gransignor never comes! It must have been beautiful in its day, Della Corona!"—he nodded at it—"the fountain, and the flowers, and all that."

Mitchell, his heart beating almost to suffocation, gazed down where Felippo was looking. The man and woman, his arm still encircling her, were moving slowly away. Fainter and fainter sounded the purling, unrestful water.

"You have never—" said Mitchell, his voice sounding staccato and nervously strained even to his own ears, "you have never seen any people in the garden down there?"

Felippo swept the place with a comprehensive look. "Never! The Holy Mary knows there is no one to be seen there! If the signor is afraid he will be disturbed by trespassers—"

"You can go, 'Lippo," said Mitchell, rising suddenly, almost sharply. He gave him a coin from his pocket without looking at it or at the man. 'Lippo went quietly away.

Down in the garden, the man and the woman were slowly ascending the steps of the opposite terrace, he laughing lazily in the secure clasp of his arm, her head almost resting against his shoulder, when at intervals she held the lily at arm's length more wholly to enjoy its starry beauty. The perfect unison of their movements was an exquisite corollary to their obvious oneness of heart. At every turn they contented and satisfied. In every touch was the harmony of contact.

Mitchell watched them hungrily, conscious of a tingling sensation amounting almost to fear, a pain of restlessness in his heart that proved his loneliness and a delicious pleasure in their lovely happiness.

At one-half of the steps they paused, and the man taking the lily from her,

twisted its long pliant stem into a circlet and crowned her with it, half seriously, half playfully. The dark stem drew a line about her sweet, proud head, confining her scarf, and at one side close to her temple and cheek the great white flower buckled it in place. She took his empty hand then, facing him, and swung forward, lifting her eyes to his.

Mitchell turned away instinctively; then with a sharp, impatient exclamation looked back. They were gone.

"Since they are there only because I see them there," said he aloud, half angrily, "why should I not watch them?"

"Beg pardon, sir?"

Gilbert, coming out from the house with his tray to remove the breakfast things, had approached near enough unseen to hear without understanding his master's impatience. Mitchell dropped into his chair with a short laugh.

"Gilbert," he said slowly, "there are some white pond-lilies growing in the basin down there. Bring me one."

"Pond-lilies!" exclaimed Gilbert, almost tipped out of his usual poise. "Why, Mr. Mitchell, sir——"

"Do as I tell you."

Gilbert knew the tone, and his thin-lipped mouth closed upon his natural expostulation. Without another word he turned to the steps, and went down neither reluctantly nor willingly into the garden. Mitchell sat at the table, his chin upon his hands, waiting without watching.

After a brief interval the shadow of his servant fell again athwart the table. It was not a sufficient satisfaction to amount to triumph, but there was a distinct tone of what-did-I-tell-you, in Gilbert's chill, even voice. "There are no lilies in the basin, sir."

"Of course not," said Mitchell quietly. "There is no water in the fountain for them to swim on. You don't expect pond-lilies to grow on dry stone, as lichen does?"

"No, sir, that's very true." Gilbert's voice had suddenly acquired a soothing quality. And as he gathered the

dishes into his tray, his eyes strayed with a furtive anxiety to his master's face.

For some days after this Mitchell, though he hoped and watched and sought for the vision of the woman, saw her not, nor her companion, and lived tranquilly in the care of the faithful if somewhat tritely-minded Gilbert. As for the experience itself he refused resolutely to embark upon idle speculation as to its possibility. It had occurred, that was his knowledge. It might occur again, that was his hope. Stranger sights had been seen, stranger visitors had haunted veracious persons—that was his justification. But to know something more about them—these gracious lovers—he could not help longing for that. He spent his empty days wandering about the great deserted place, finding as he had expected sweet traces of its bloom, and tokens of the long-gone life. Yet deeply absorbed as he might be in laying bare an overgrown inscription about the base of a blindfolded cupid, or tracing an obliterated path to its original purpose and destination, he never so far lost himself that his ears forgot to listen for the murmuring liquid plashing sound of water in the dusty basin of the fountain. Yet he was an impatient man, this Mitchell, in spite of the deep, leisurely delight he took in keeping his mystery well within the bounds of unbelief, and after he had gone on several days without the reward of seeing either of his spiritual visitants, having left no corner of the park unvisited and longing for still further fields for his idle researches, he sent for 'Lippo, and the villa keys.

III

WELL might the man apologize for the unwholesome air that enveloped them when the door admitted them to the dusty, unsunned house. All the candles that could be crowded upon the altar of the good Mary of the Olive Branch had been unable to make of

his pleasant lies a cleanly truth. The place was dirty and damp, and yet Mitchell went in eagerly and without disdain—even he, who looked as clean as a new pin and had a man to wash him all the time!

As a matter of fact, Mitchell was possessed of an impression that he would find them, those two, find them there somewhere, if only for an instant. He would never be content, he told himself, until he had really seen her face, though he knew clearly that after that it would be the man's face he wished to see, and after that to see them together, and after that to see them again; and that in all chances he should never, never be satisfied and surfeited at all, but go on seeking them always. Yet a man cannot live all his life in the pavilion of a neglected villa, spending his prime of life in the pursuit of two ghosts. Even at the moment, knowing that with every day of his quietude his bodily health returned and increased, and that in all conscience he should within a short time have to return to the duties of his natural life at home, he did not see clearly how he was ever to go away from the enchanted spot, how he was to turn his back forever on the garden that sheltered her.

Yes, it was true, he thought more of her, as was masculinely natural, than of the lover. Yet they were so beautifully one in all things that they would have been so in his most secret thought, had he not seen her for the first time alone. He did usually think of them together, and loved it thus, and yet the vision of the woman alone was—he had to acknowledge it—the one he most longed to see.

Felippo discoursed at parrot length about the staircase, which indeed was beautiful enough to claim even Mitchell's pre-absorbed attention. But the man's voice, and especially his presence, irked him, and so soon as he could in a kindly way, he bade him go and come to the pavilion later for the keys. And 'Lippo, with another shining silver piece between his fingers, went willingly enough.

Left alone, Mitchell fell to wandering about, half aimlessly going from one dusty apartment to another without noticing more about it than that it was empty of the presence that he sought. The rooms were large and perfectly proportioned, and in the faint light showed the shadow of their richness.

Gradually, as the irrepressible hope of seeing again the gracious revelation of the garden faded within him, he began to imagine, by way of substitute, how and where in the villa they might have been, in those days when—he felt certain—they had been there in very flesh. This drew his attention more to the place itself, considered as a setting for them, and he became, in his own feeling, more intimately in harmony with the faint, soft atmosphere of unmoving memory. Here in this place they might have sat together, whispering over and over the untiring litany of love, and her hair—he knew it beneath the sheltering scarf as yellow as ripe corn—would shine out with a misty light against the somber neutral tones of the woven hangings just behind. Leaning forward, he touched the tapestry tenderly, as if he had been intrusted by that lover with a caress yet undelivered. He wandered out into the corridor and saw the place on the famous stairway where she must—ah, surely must—have paused for that sweet backward look, and where, obeying it, he must—ah, must indeed—have followed to her side, and lifted up his face to drink the uttermost fragrance of her hair that fell about them both to shelter the passion of the parting kiss. And here above, as he went slowly, reverently in her footsteps, these rooms must be her own, those secret places where her woman vainly tried to make the lily whiter and the gold more pure. Was there not even a subtle smell of perfumes in the still, dark air, a breath of brodered garments? Was not the dusk surcharged with her sweet presence, her dear, mysterious womanhood? Here at the window she must have greeted the warm morning sun

and perhaps, as well, the morning lover waiting down below for the bold falling rose that brought the first kiss from her sister lips.

With an unyielding pressure, and yet gently for the sweet sake of the silence, he pushed the long-closed window open and leaned out. The fresher air came to his palate like a cooling drink. He looked dreamily and long down into the sunken garden, at the dry basin of the fountain, and the weedy overgrowth that covered all the ground. On the terrace opposite beside the broken balustrade Gilbert was preparing the dainty table for his evening meal. As he watched him, he realized how far away it all seemed, that real life over there, how irrepressibly more important, more imperative the tissue of his dreams and visions.

He turned away, sitting down on the sill, facing the room. Undoubtedly, this had been a woman's tiring-room. The room, whose window-wall ran at right angles from his back, that was her sleeping chamber, undeniably. He abandoned himself to the delight of these surmises. Yes, in the dewy morning she would come through the door here at his right hand, all rosy and disheveled from her dreams, wrapped in a gown of silk-soft old brocade. And here before that happy fated mirror, her woman would bind up her flowing hair in shining plaits and curls, high, high upon her head that she might not damp it while she bathed. And after the sweet-scented bath, while on her knees the woman dressed her little feet, she would have sat there playing with her morning roses and telling over the strange visions of the night, laughing and puzzling at their presages. Would she not try a rose against her hair? Would she not—?

Mitchell raised his head. Truly imagination goes a far way when to dream of roses in a woman's hand brings to one's nostrils quite distinctly, unmistakably, their rich, warm smell. He lifted his head still higher and drew his breath deeply. Surely there was

no mistake. Nothing on earth but roses had that scent. Was it in the room? His heart with one first bound began to beat faster and faster. Was this the herald of her coming? Should he see her once again—the gracious, queen-like vision of the youthful woman in her first paradise of love? Yet the full tide of perfume swelled deliciously. He drank his body full of it. It came in at the window on the faintly stirring air—in at the window! With an ecstasy of expectation he started up and turned. Then held his breath and looked at her.

She was standing at the window, whose wall ran at right angles to his own. She was, as ever, all in white, the white scarf bound lightly about her head and throat, and in her arms she held a sheaf of yellow roses. She stood motionless, looking down into the garden.

It was the first time he had really seen her face, and he was conscious of many emotions as he looked at her. There was wonder at her beauty, homage for her purity, half-pain in her exceeding youth already embarked on so dangerous a journey, but more than all was a vague, bewildering stirring of memory. Memory! Something in the face—was it in the great, childishly mournful eyes, or in the curving pretty lips, or in the shape of the delicately sturdy chin, or in the mere expression of the whole?—something in the unlighted recesses of his mind recognized and found familiar. So unexpected was this feeling that it engulfed the others almost to obliteration. At first he was uncertain, the suggestion was too illusive to challenge proof; then it became more and more insistent, until he found himself as positive as if he had been able to speak her name. Indeed, at intervals in the breathless space that he watched her, it seemed as if her name did actually surge up within him only to be lost again before he could give it voice.

As he stared into her face he watched its expression change, from sweet, quiescent waiting, to a brighter pleasure and then to a melting, word-

less confession of dear love. Able for an instant only to take his eyes away from her, he threw one brief look in the direction of her gaze, and saw indeed her lover on the terrace opposite. He saw him pass Gilbert, as a shadow passes a palpable obstacle, and knew that neither of them saw the other. As he looked back to her, she had leaned her arms on the window-sill and was bending out, as the Blessed Damosel leaned out from the gold bar of heaven. He knew by the sudden lighting of her smile the very instant when their eyes met and by her girlish amusement and delight that the lover was hurrying since he saw her. It was a short, sweet time of heart-beating, until with the last bound of his running he sprang beneath her window and bared his head in homage as his eyes yearned at her. He was boyishly attractive, with a certain fresh, clear charm upon him. Mitchell looked down at him, and back at her and down at him, and back, as if he could never see enough. Still no sound broke the silence of their tryst.

And then with a smile that turned Mitchell's blood to fire in his veins, she gently laid her hand outspread upon the roses, and closing her fingers with a pretty ruthlessness, plucked off at one gesture a whole handful of the golden petals. This she lifted to her lovely face and kissed, and then, holding it at arm's length, looking down at him with a roguishness, let fall the amorous rain of perfumed leaves upon his upturned face. They fell about him like an enchanted shower, dowering him with her desire. And still no sound.

Looking down he saw the man hold out his arms longingly. He saw his lips move, but no words came. Still she understood, as well as she might, for his meaning was written clear in the pleading of his attitude. She nodded then, blithely, and laughed, soundlessly. And suddenly she left the window and disappeared.

Cut to the heart with the sudden apprehension of losing them again, Mitchell sprang to the door. The room where she had stood was empty. The

lavish sweetness of the roses was gone. He knew, in a miserable coldness, before he went to the window and looked down, that there would be no one in the garden, no ardent lover with outstretched hands and upturned face. Across the parterre, on the terrace opposite, Gilbert was preparing the dainty table for his evening meal.

IV

IN the time following this, when Mitchell saw nothing of them, the mystery of the woman's familiar look haunted him with an engrossing persistence. Where, where had he seen that face, that high-born gentleness that crowned her as visibly as had the water-lily of the dusty, dry basin, that straightforward, intrepid look in the eyes that illumine the patrician soul, that purity of mouth and brow and throat crimsoning in passion with pride, not shame, that outline of the lovely chin so firmly sweet? There—there once more—would stir an answer in his memory, and lapse again, and almost with the word upon his lips he would fall silent and his brows would knit.

In the meanwhile, his bodily health was returning in a steady tidal flow of strength. There was no surer indication of his advancement than that Gilbert, in the exercise of his discretionary authority, had seen fit one morning at breakfast to let him see a letter or two and the papers. Gilbert, if he had expected—hope was too disarranging an emotion to be admitted—that Mitchell would display relief or gratification at this evidence of his progression, was doomed to whatever well-conducted substitute for disappointment was laid in the orderly storage of his nature. Mitchell was positively brusque with the letters, and so ungracious to the news that the man withdrew its unwelcome presence. It was the touch, the beckoning touch of the outer world that hurt him, the long-avoided call of the still, small voice that irritated. Such a piece of crass stupidity—this getting well. Why,

compared to it, Eve's silly mouth-watering after forbidden apples was as the wisdom of Solomon, for at least she could carry the interdicted gratification with her when the gates of Eden closed behind her and the husbandman. But what was he to do when banished from this garden! Was he to go back to Manhattan and be satisfied with clubrooms and ticker-tape and roof vaudeville? Was he to exchange for the grossly material, jostling, ill-mannered crowd of that city the graceful ghosts of this ethereal romance and not despair of the choice? Was he to endure the cheapening clangor of the streets when wondering if here in the dry fountain the water could be heard to move and whirl?

"Why am I getting better, Gilbert?" he inquired testily, as that impassive individual returned to his side. "If it is the food, starve me. If it's the sunshine, let it be darkened. I want an excuse for staying here!"

It may be that in the days of his unthinking youth, Gilbert may have been betrayed to laughter, but the greatest indulgence in the expression of this feeling that he now permitted himself was the rigid and brief facial contortion intended for a smile that he now bestowed upon his lord and master.

"If you were Hinglish, Mr. Mitchell, you'd always be glad to return to your native 'ome, sir." Gilbert laid down on the table another journal, one of the foreign folios of pictures and last month's news. "I thought—since you didn't care for the hother, sir, you might hentertain yourself with this."

"Thank you," said Mitchell.

Gilbert took a coldly tired look at the prospect as he began to remove the breakfast dishes. "Hevery man to 'is hown tastes, Mr. Mitchell. I'm sure I shall not be sorry when we leaves this plyce."

"I suppose it is lonely for you, Gilbert," said Mitchell, in an absently kind voice, as he inattentively turned the pages of the magazine. He was conscious only of wishing with all his soul that he might, when he looked up

again, see a woman in white on the steps of the opposite terrace.

"You may say so, sir, without hany charge of complaining. The Eyetal-ian and his wife are picturesque, perhaps, but no company for an Hinglish-man, and it's my hown 'umble opinion, Mr. Mitchell, that no people who doesn't crave tea at four or five in the hafternoon, has in them the mykings of a great nation."

"You think, then," said Mitchell, turning the folio around to look at a lengthwise illustration of Rotten Row, "that if tea-drinking had been introduced among the ancestors of this possibly picturesque nation, Rome would not have fallen from her high estate?"

Gilbert laid the cloth over the tray with a British instinct of decency. "I'm not enough of a savant to say, sir, but I can honly see what the tea may have done for hus and might for them."

"Good God!" cried Mitchell, on his feet suddenly with the picture sheet held before his own incredulous eyes. "It is—it surely is—it can't be—of course it is!"

A look of real distress passed over the servant's face. "If I had known there was hanything to upset you—Mr. Mitchell—whatever hit is or hain't—and you don't seem clear as to that—don't excite yourself, if you please. Dr. Moulton would be—" Here Gilbert, who had edged around far enough to get a glimpse of the page in Mitchell's hands, perceived that nothing more than a page portrait of the Grand Duchess of Göttenburg-Blenhau in court costume had so affected him. There was no mistake about its being the picture, for Mitchell was even then rehearsing her name and titles, prompted by the notes beneath, which also announced her marriage soon to take place at Rome to an important member of the Hapsburg family.

"It is, of course it is—a little older, naturally—perhaps all of ten years older, but still a woman under thirty. I knew the face was not unfamiliar—I was sure I had seen—" He caught himself up then, remembering

Gilbert. But that forehanded person had already remembered himself, and was completely engaged in lifting the shrouded tray from the table. Considering the fact that it would have been impossible for Mitchell to make any explanation, it was just as well that their relation put one out of the question. And though the master might briefly wonder what the man was wondering, he was too engrossed in his new discovery to pay any heed to anything but its assurance. As Gilbert went away stolidly, in a most commendable triumph of control, Mitchell spread out the page on the table and proceeded to give it the colder investigation of a calmer moment. But in no way could the verdict be altered by even the most skeptical consideration. He knew—he positively knew! He was reminded in an amused way of a toy he had one Christmas bought for a little nephew—where one fastened one end of the electric wire to a metal pin beside a question and passed the other end up and down the pins that marked the answers, recognizing the right one because the thing rang a sharp, conclusive bell when that pin was reached. Even so he had gone groping in his mind for the answer to the mystery of her familiar look, and he had heard the unmistakable ringing when the words, “Grand Duchess of Göttenburg-Blenhau” met his eyes. He had seen her—why, not so long ago—only a short time before his illness. Stupid of him not to have recognized the face at the window at once. Of course, the girl in white was much younger. He looked up and across the garden as he thought it, as if he expected her to be standing there awaiting comparison. He stared moodily at the villa. It was all very well to be so sure—but the duchess was still living and it didn’t seem credible that one left behind one every year or so a ghost, as a serpent sheds a skin. The idea of ghosts in themselves, the apparition of a spirit released by death, he had always been two-thirds ready to receive. After all, it was no

more strange that it should, if it chose, be visible, than that it should be so palpably within a given body and then so palpably leave the body tenantless. Everything to him was incredible. The growth of the child into the man, the red blossom on the green stem, the lifting of the sea by the moon, the speaking of telegraph instruments across a wireless space—these things were infinitely harder to accept even on the testimony of his own eyes, than that a spirit when separated from its flesh should appear so. But for one thing he would have really “believed in ghosts”—it had always seemed to him the souls of the departed must have something better to do than to haunt the scenes of their earthly uselessness. Still it was going rather far afield to think of ghosts with the portrait of the living woman under your hand! Yet he had seen them! He deliberately kept his eyes from the page. He could recall precisely every line of her face, for in the long-short time that he had stood at the window he had learned its every point and line by heart. He tried now to think of that face, altered by ten progressions of the Zodiac, saddened by ten visitations from Cancer, strengthened by Leo, instructed by Libra, embittered by Aries, sweetened by Virgo, invigorated by Sagittarius, encouraged by Taurus, wounded by Scorpio, refreshed by Aquarius, enriched by Capricornus, depressed by Pisces, and enlivened by Gemini—what sort of a face would the years have molded from the face he had seen at the window? Just such a face, he said in answer, as that pictured here beneath his hands. He withdrew his steadfast look from the villa, and let his glance fall again upon the picture, trying to keep in mind at once the original and the changes. Instantly, as his mind received the impression of the photograph, the little bell rang in his head. There was no mistaking it. The woman in white on the terrace, beside the fountain, at the window, was the Grand Duchess Catarin, of Göttenburg-Blenhau.

It made her infinitely dearer, for some strange reason, that he could call her by name. Catarin—Catarin. He said it over and over. And why should he bother himself as to the reason or rhyme in the appearance of the youth of Catarin? Suffice it that it came, that it *was* seen of him! Another effect that the discovery had upon him was that it altered his desire to know anything about the man. Now that he knew the woman was Catarin of Blenhau, now above all that he knew she was a woman living, about to be married with all the pomp and grandeur of cardinals and courtiers, he shrank from knowing anything concerning this young lover as he would have revolted at the idea of spying into the privacy of a woman's love-letters. It made him hope that if ever the appearance did come again, he might see her alone as sometimes he did. Though it was scarcely possible that by any combination of coincidences would he be likely to discover the identity of the man as well—still somehow it was "all different now," as children say.

V

At the very time that he was making and adjusting his great discovery, 'Lippo and Maria were experiencing sensation as well. 'Lippo, who had industriously looked on while Maria weeded their frugal plot of garlic, was later busily engaged in a mid-morning somnolence, when the sound of carriage wheels upon the road roused him to attention, if not activity. Maria herself came out from the stuffy hut, where she spent most of the day in order to escape the invigoration of better air, and looked up the road. The house was near the spot where the private roads to the pavilion and villa branched from the highway. To his slow and unspeakable horror, the heavy handsome coach turned in from the public road, with a deliberation that froze his blood.

"Jesu, Maria!" said his wife,

hoarsely in a whisper. "Can it be the gransignor—after all the candles and the *Aves*?"

Felippo got to his feet weakly. "The benevolent God forbid!" he said.

"The dirt!" groaned Maria.

"The Americano signor!" snarled 'Lippo, half turning to her.

"Jesu, Maria! I had forgotten him! Oh, 'Lippo, 'Lippo, shall we be hanged, think you?"

But 'Lippo, who seemed in no mood for useless speculation, and driven in some despair to know the worst, had stepped out into the road, and, cap in hand, conciliatory to his finger-tips, hailed the coachman quietly. "You are on the wrong road, it appears," he suggested.

The man pulled up uncertainly and looked at the footman. "What does he say?" he asked in German.

"That we are on the wrong road," replied the younger individual on the box. He leaned across the reins and asked 'Lippo, in Italian, what road it was that they were on.

"This is the private road of the gransignor. We are most particular to keep it arranged for him." The road showed little sign of it, and indeed, the remark seemed to have little bearing on the case, but Felippo brought it forward in the hope that it would plead for him later as an evidence of his devotion to duty.

At the moment the window of the carriage was sharply let down and a fat, fussy head, bonneted in lilac, was thrust out. "What is the matter?" demanded the head, also in German. The footman leaped down instantly and ran around to the door.

"He says we are on the wrong road," said the footman again.

"Well, are we?" asked the stout lady, with some acumen.

"I don't know," was the reply.

"Donkey!" snorted the head. "Come here, man!"

Felippo, looking from one to the other, turned his cap around in his hands nervously.

"He speaks only Italian, your highness," said the footman.

The fat lady changed to that tongue without any abatement of her petulance or, indeed, any change in her accent. "Come here, man!"

Felippo bounded forward and bowed. But at the moment the head of the stout lady withdrew itself in response to an inaudible appeal from within, and after a slight upheaval inside the carriage, another head appeared at the window. This head was covered with a small white round hat from which hung a white chiffon veil, that partially obscured the face. Still a graciousness that could not be hid shone out, matching the soft charm of the voice, which spoke the language of Felippo in a way to ravish his senses.

"What is the road, then, if you please?"

"Most gracious lady, the private road of the villa."

"Of the Villa Della Corona?" she asked. She brought the name out after a little pause as if she were half afraid of it.

Felippo's knees went suddenly weaker.

"But, yes, most gracious lady. Do you come from the gransignor?"

The question was sufficiently abrupt to startle her into an answer which he did not deserve. "Oh, no—we are merely—it is permitted to see the place, is it not?—the staircase, perhaps?"

Felippo's knees underwent a grateful strengthening. "It is—if the gracious lady will permit—an honor. I am the unworthy custodian of the keys. Is it that madame will desire to see the pavilion as well?"

"Oh, yes—of a surety—everything."

"It will be arranged as the gracious lady desires," promised 'Lippo. He felt confident that the Americano signor would not be difficult to manage on this score, though it is doubtful if he would have been so sure of Gilbert. "Maria, the keys!" he called to her. "My good wife," he explained humbly, with another bow, "who assists me in— in watching the property."

The gracious lady extended a gra-

cious hand as Maria approached with the keys—the gracious fingers held a gracious piece of money. "This is for you," she said gently, "and thank you." Before Felippo could interfere, she had taken the keys herself. "I will bring them back safely," she said to him. "But for the rest, I prefer to go alone." At that she drew back into the carriage, the footman leaped into his place and the coach promptly rolled on without giving 'Lippo a chance to mention the Americano signor at the pavilion.

When the gracious lady leaned back in the carriage, two things were apparent to her companion, albeit she was rather fixedly staring in front of her. One was that there were tears in the eyes behind the white veil, and the other was that the touch of the gracious lady was bestowing an amount of tenderness upon the rusty bunch of big keys that they could by no stretch of imagination be expected to appreciate. Still, though it was most evident that the stout lady had little forbearance in her nature, and might at any moment be expected—and had, indeed, been known—to snort her uncompimentary estimate of more important people than the Felippos of life, she was on this occasion as quiet as if she were thoroughly in sympathy with the expedition.

"What a wonderful thing is a key!" said the gracious lady softly, and in a voice by no means as steady as they both pretended to believe it. "It is the symbol of all the mysteries of life, of all the closed doors, of all the finished chapters, of all the guarded treasures, of all the poor prisoners! You hold a key in your hand—a key to you know not what—and you start out in the world like the princes in the fairy stories to find the lock that it will fit. Some of us never find it, I believe. Some of us, after we have unlocked the door, would rather far have died without knowing what lay beyond. Some of us"—the sweet voice wavered falteringly and then went on—"some of us find that our key unlocks the door of heaven and lets us in.

And even if the day comes when we have to depart and lock the door again behind us, we carry the key to our graves, in our breasts."

The stout lady moved a bit impatiently, but that was only because she had felt something like a tear on her own cheek. The speaker understood her, however—they seemed in spite of their absurd incongruousness to understand one another instinctively—and her tone changed to one a little more cheerful. "How they accumulate, these keys; eh, Helma? One has bunches and bunches, and rings and rings, and boxes and boxes full of them. I could no more throw away a key than I would part with my hair. See, now, on this chain—here are as many as ten keys, and I am certain we shall need but one or two to let us into the villa. Yet, I dare say all these other useless bits of metal will hang there always—nobody will have the heart to fling them away. It will always be said, 'After all, one can never tell—one might need them!'"

The stout personage, whom she had addressed as Helma, looked down at the keys in question, and seemed to repress a snort of contempt for the intelligence that persisted in retaining them. She did repress it, however, and said in a far gentler tone than many persons had ever heard her use, or indeed, would have believed her capable of using, "When you say 'we' are going into the villa, I trust you are speaking *en grand duchess*. For I beg you will excuse me. I am an old woman, and the villa will be horrid, and the carriage is comfortable. I should consider it a great favor, Catarin, if you would be willing to go in unattended."

Catarin put out her hand and laid it over that of the other woman. "You are a very dear thing," she said simply. "Look out of the window, Helma. Do you remember the road?"

The Princess Helma was a very terrible figure to many people who did not know that with all her impatience and fierceness she had a great, silly, romantic heart, and could cry herself

to sleep any night over a sad love story. Now not even the veriest milk-sop of a page at court would have been impressed by her possibilities could he have seen her fat blue eyes swimming in sudden tears as she obeyed her companion and looked out at the passing scene.

"It seems like yesterday," she said.

"It seems a thousand centuries ago," said Catarin. She was maintaining her control quietly without any visible effort, but her face had grown whiter than her veil, and her hands, upon the great rusty keys, were gripped convulsively. "You were very good to me in those days, Helma."

"No, no," murmured the other brokenly.

"I don't mean that you are not still good to me," went on Catarin, "for you are, you know, in coming here today, for example, in making it possible for me to come. For oh, I could not have put it all away from me, dear Helma, without coming back to say good-bye to it. I could not have put it all away from me—as I must now—as I must now—without coming back to bring it the message I know that it has waited for all these ten years."

Helma sobbed slowly as the tears rolled over her flabby cheeks.

"I like to think that it has lain here, the dear garden, underneath ten lovely summers, waiting for me to return to it. I know that not a day of my life has passed that I have not lived over again some of the dear scenes that are written down and pictured in my heart, always with the beautiful garden for a background. Ah, Helma, what a beautiful setting it had, my happiness! Do you remember the great fields of violets on the terraces?"

Helma gulped and nodded. "And the roses, the yellow roses!"

"Yes, and the yellow roses—and the fountain!" She stopped suddenly, as if even her intrepid poise were threatened. The carriage rolled along slowly through the circuitous road. Presently, with almost a catch of breath Catarin put out her hand and rang the bell. Instantly the horses were pulled

up and the footman was at the window. "Drive no farther," said Catarin quietly. "I wish to descend."

The footman opened the door and stood gravely, the brilliant sunlight glittering on the gold of his cockade and cordon. The gracious lady turned to Helma and took her hands.

"The villa is just around the turn here. I—I can't bear to come upon it suddenly, like this. And—and I want to be quite alone when I do see it. You understand, Helma, don't you?"

"Yes—yes," sobbed the good creature. "Go, my child—go."

Catarin kissed one of the wet cheeks with a tenderness unfeigned. Then she turned and, laying her hand upon the stiff arm held out by the gold-laced lackey, stepped down into the road.

"I wish to be unattended. Turn the carriage and wait for me. I shall be gone perhaps an hour." She waited while the manœuver of turning the great coach was successfully accomplished, and then started slowly forward, her long white cloak clearing the ground about her daintily as she walked.

It seemed, when she reached that turn of road beyond which she knew the eastern façade of the villa would be visible, it seemed almost as if she must close her eyes, as if the sight of it would be as unbearable as the light must have been to him whose long blindness was in a moment washed away. She stopped a moment, her mouth trembling. Then, with the courage of her own brave blood, flaunting a sudden unsundered banner in her cheeks, she went on, her head high and her eyes burning and her breath troublous in her throat. She came to the turn itself and turned it, and, with a cry like a cry of pain and a cry of joy mingled into one, she flung her hands out in a regal gesture of ultimate longing. Silent and deserted though it stood before her, it seemed to her imagination that the great heart of it must have begun to throb within it, as her own was now tumultuously beating in her breast.

"You know me, do you not? You

know that I am here," she whispered, her hands still outheld. Then, with her eyes closed, unfalteringly she trod the path, stopped at the very step, and with a sob sank down, her hands thrown out upon the threshold. It was a long time that she lay thus, a white, motionless figure, abandoned to the tides of an agony of memory. Then, with the grace that was her every movement, she rose again slowly, and, standing so, tossed back her veil and wiped away her tears. They were the first and the last she was to shed.

In a tremulous excitement she fitted the key into the great door and pushed upon the massive panels. Reluctantly, and yet perhaps only so for the joy of her sweet pressure, the door yielded and swung open, and, with her hand upon her heart, the gracious lady entered her house of life.

VI

MITCHELL, who had remained, under the hidden but, it must be said, curious eyes of Gilbert, for an unwontedly long time on the terrace by the side of the broken balustrade, at last picked up the magazine and came within doors, to change his shoes as usual before taking his morning walk; and when Gilbert came to his bedroom with the boots, he found his master standing before a picture that he had just pinned to the wall. He knew easily enough that this was the same picture which had so excited his master at breakfast. Mitchell seemed vastly engrossed in looking at it, so much so that Gilbert had carelessly to drop one of the boots before his presence was recognized. Mitchell sat down then in his chair and twitched at his trousers knees.

"Gilbert," said he, as the man knelt down before him, "what is your opinion on the subject of ghosts?"

It must be said that even a long schooling in exacting service had not steeled Gilbert for the extraordinary surprises this master prepared for him.

The valet looked up, for him almost nervously.

"Ghosts, Mr. Mitchell? I—I never saw one."

"I don't suppose you have. Still, you might have an opinion on the subject."

"Oh, has to that, sir, I suppose I 'ave. Very 'armless, I should him-agine, sir, howing to their lack of muscle, has you may say. Rather 'air-raising to meet hat the same time, for reasons I'm sure I can't give you, sir. Other foot, sir, please."

"Still you believe in them then?" said Mitchell, idly recrossing his legs.

"Well, that, sir, I couldn't say. I've 'eard of them. It isn't supposed, is it, sir, that this 'ere pavilion is 'aunted?"

"Not generally believed," replied Mitchell. "Still, it's just as well to prepare for such things."

"Perhaps hit is, sir. Will you just stand hup, if you please?" He went on talking amiably as one who has personally no interest but the charitable thought of entertaining another, the while he deftly turned up his master's trousers to keep their whiteness from the dust. "I suppose an hold place like this would be as like to 'ave its ghosts as another. You're not nervous habout them, are you, sir?"

"Not very," said Mitchell dubiously. "I'm going to write a letter or two before I go out, Gilbert."

"Very well, sir, very well," commended Gilbert. "Not more than two short ones, 'owever, Mr. Mitchell. Dr. Moulton, sir, 'e said——"

"Oh, nonsense," replied Mitchell sharply. "The trouble with me is that I'm getting altogether too well."

Gilbert gave him a long, keen look. "You really feel so, sir?"

"I feel"—this very disgustedly—"perfectly and entirely well and healthy."

"Because, sir——"

"Because what?" Mitchell turned at the door, frowning.

"Why, sir, I begs a thousand pardons, sir, but there was this despatch, yesterday—no, the day before. I

'eld it hup, sir, feeling you was in no way able to attend to it." Gilbert was fumbling in his inner breast-pockets. "But if you hare able, sir, to hattend to business, I certainly 'ave no rights to keep you in hignorance."

"A despatch?" echoed Mitchell, holding out a hand.

"A cyble, sir. 'Ere it is. I 'opes I've not done wrong to 'old it hoff till you was better, sir."

Mitchell took it and weighed it in his hand. The still small voice speaking through the modern megaphone! He tore it open with a quick, nervous jerk and spread the page to his eyes. Then slowly, somewhat wearily, he crumbled it in his hand.

"Humph! Well, of course, it had to come some time."

"Not bad news, I 'ope, Mr. Mitchell?"

"Why, not for you, Gilbert. Mrs. Haskell is very ill and Haskell has got to go to her. It means, of course, that I must go back to the Grind." He held up the page. "It says 'if physically able'—I am so abominably well!"

He stood in the doorway, kicking his heels like a child sent off unwillingly to school. "Well"—he drew a breath—"there's one comfort. It doesn't leave me any loophole, does it? Mine not to question why; mine but to do and die. Damn it all! You should have let me have this sooner, Gilbert. We should have telegraphed for the yacht——"

"I can do that hat once, sir," repeated the man, clashing the discarded shoes together, in lieu of cymbals, deprecatingly. "I was quite hat a loss, sir, 'aving no one to refer to. I'm sorry hif I did wrong, sir."

"You've given me a day longer in paradise. I won't complain," said Mitchell. "Telegraph before noon to Sargent. Tell him to stock up. We will leave here by sunset, and reach there at dawn. Pack up, and curse you! It had to come some time, I suppose—it would never have been any easier."

He went slowly and in a deep abstraction from the room. Gilbert, to whom packing was as nothing, in the

orderly disposition of his master's traveling-kit, magnified his soul, and cast the boots silently, gravely at the ceiling. If he had known—should it be confessed?—if he had known the instant liberation from this deserted farm that lay in the cable he had hidden in his breast, who knows—he didn't!—if he should have spared his master even those short blessed hours?

He went into the bedroom which overlooked the garden to begin his packing. And he folded into coats and stuffed into shoes and wound into neckscarfs his own unflattering opinions of Italia in general and this pavilion in particular. It was during this process when, with a shirt of Mitchell's he was metamorphosing himself into a kind of windmill his glance fell inadvertently into the garden.

His subsequent manœuvres were worthy of remark. He dropped the shirt upon the floor, took a long, sharp stare through the window, a quick, noiseless rush into the farther room, a hurried, satisfactory glance at the paper portrait pinned upon the wall, and then, in the triumphant importance of a person with some startling intelligence to communicate, went down below and sought out Mitchell, where he sat twirling a wordless pen and staring moodily at the wall.

"I begs a thousand pardons for disturbing you, Mr. Mitchell, but has for what you was saying a while ago habout ghosts——"

"You have come to give notice?" put in Mitchell, needlessly wiping his pen in a leisurely fashion. "It's hardly worth while when we are both leaving tonight."

"I was habout to say, sir, that though I did for a moment think it was a ghost, sir, in the garden, since the lady is hall in white, sir, has soon has I saw 'er face I knew it was hall right, it being the same lady as you 'ave in the picture upstairs."

With a curious, concentrated calmness upon him Mitchell, who had risen, put the man out of his way with one touch and went straight out of the house. Had Gilbert followed him,

which he would by no means have thought of doing, he would have seen that that same curious and concentrated calm obtained within him as he followed the path to the top of the steps and there stopped, looking down into the garden. As a matter of fact, Mitchell did feel just as he amazingly appeared. He could have gone to the guillotine in no greater quiet of look and of sensation. And there was something almost as momentarily final in the consummation he now devoutly wished.

As he stood in the accustomed place looking down he was aware that the flood of excitement was at last breaking asunder the confines of ice under which it had flowed, and that the ice itself melting to add to the volume of the cataract bid fair to do even greater damage than the swollen stream.

It was the actual mortal sight of her that so overwhelmed him, the real, palpable flesh-and-blood humanness of her that moved him, as even no sensational mirage could ever have done.

There she stood by the side of the fountain, all in white, while the faint, stirring air, lifting her veil, spread its folds wide into a single gossamer thickness. Without being exactly conscious of his own motive, he went down the steps slowly and approached her. It was not until he was quite near her that she heard the sound of his footfall and turned.

"Ach!" she cried, in soft, pretty German, her natural shock carrying her back to the days when all women were free and equal and before the time when grand duchesses had been invented. Her two hands flew to her coat lapels and held there in mute apprehension.

Mitchell, who felt as a man intoxicated beyond the trammels of earthly considerations, came steadfastly toward her and bowed. The color flaming in her cheeks at her exclamation faded again, leaving her pale and wondering.

"I am sorry," said Mitchell in her chosen tongue, "that they are long since dead—the water-lilies."

Her eyes opened wider, with a quick surprise amounting almost to fear.

"You see, the fountain has long been dry—ever since you were last here, I think. And pond flowers—well, they need the pond, you know."

He was conscious of a supreme conviction that it was all unreal. Perhaps he had fallen asleep over his letters. Perhaps he had in a moment lost his wits. But he could not, it seemed, do other than as he did.

"You should regret their going, too," he went on, in the drunken exaltation, "for never in your life have you been as beautiful as you were with one of these lilies twisted about your head as a coronet—never, though you wore the crown of all the Old World, Catarina."

She took a step or two from him, and, with her hand upon her heart, with her eyes still upturned to his in something very like terror, she sank into the marble bench as if her limbs were powerless to hold her erect.

"Do you remember," said Mitchell, still submerged and over-drowned in the feeling of unreality, "the evening when you left a token and—and a kiss here in this very bench? Do you remember the morning when you let fall a rain of golden rose-petals from your window?"

She had shrunk from him into the very farthest corner of the bench, her face a mask of horror. It was then—for his eyes had strayed about at the places of which he was speaking—that he looked at her. She had almost collapsed in her white robe, almost shriveled beneath the accusatory details he brought out as weapons against her. When his eyes fell upon her face, the look of its horror was reflected in his own. Hardly aware of the extravagance of his action he knelt before her and raised both her hands to his kiss.

"Altesse—Catarin—forgive me—I was unaware—I entreat your pardon—for the love of God—I am your most lowly servant, upon my soul—what have I done? I know nothing, before heaven, nothing."

She seemed to take his protesta-

tions drop by drop, as perhaps a sufferer might be administered a stimulant. She did not draw her hands from his, but closing her fingers slightly, lifted herself a little by their aid.

"Who are you?" she asked, trembling.

"I? Nobody—an American nobody."

"But—but——"

Her voice, unwilling, perhaps even unable, to form her questions, died on her red mouth. In the pause, as she loosened his hands, he laid one on the seat beside her and raised himself to sit there.

It was very gently that he told her what he had seen, describing under the pitiless lash of her questions every minute detail. She listened with parted lips that seemed to drink his words for breath. He knew that her own inability quite to credit his words, in spite of her knowledge of the truth, matched his own incredulity before the affidavit of his eyes.

When he finished telling his story, and resaying the many apologies for his part of eavesdropper which had prefaced it, she drew a long sigh, and turned to look behind them at the villa.

"You saw—him, too?"

"As I saw you, Altesse."

She was silent a moment. "I suppose it means that he was doing just as I, living his life here, every day."

"It must be, I suppose. But even so, why visible to me?"

"Why not? You were here?"

"But so have others been—my valet, the caretaker, his wife——"

"Not in tune," she said, with a kindly look.

"But why visible to anyone?"

She shook her head a bit. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in my philosophy."

"But a ghost—and you alive?"

She looked at him sadly then. "Ah, no, not alive," she answered earnestly.

"I died here, ten years ago!"

He almost started. "And he, too?"

"Yes, yes, we both died. This was

our life—it came to an end. We died—indeed, indeed!” She started up with a little moaning sound, and wrung her hands together. “I only wish they’d bury me!” she said. She walked over to the dry fountain, and looked into its dusty basin, as he had done so often. Having risen when she did, he stood without looking at her until, as he was becoming aware that she was quieter, she came back to him, and sat down.

“I am going to tell you,” she said.

Mitchell bowed his head and resumed his seat, feeling greatly humbled. There was no need for him to express to her in words that he understood the honor, the amazing favor she was bestowing upon him in this gracious act. There was no need for her to say why she told him, why it would be impossible for her to tell anyone else. They began without any need of self-explanatory preliminaries on the plane of the woman who had sent her soul through the invisible and the man who had seen it on that starry mission. She spoke without looking at him, keeping her face turned toward the terrace below the pavilion. Mitchell, with his chin upon his breast, seemed scarcely to breathe.

“He is—no, I must begin now to use the other tense; I should perhaps have done so long ago—he was the perfection of manhood, in my eyes. From the first moment that I saw him I loved him. That is the story of almost every woman in the world, is it not? But it always amazed me that it was so with me. I had never expected to love anyone like that. We are not brought up as other girls are, with an idea of a lover and a starlit night, and a kiss, and a wedding, and a home of our own making. I knew that my part would be to study, study, study—ach, how much they demand that we shall learn!—until some day, as a blessed liberation, I should be informed that I was to be married to somebody or other. And that, continuing my part, I should be officially betrothed, officially united in marriage, officially presented with gifts, officially

congratulated and officially sent off to employ what of my learning I found use for at another court, display my official jewels and bear my official sons.”

There was no bitterness in her recital of the expectations of a princess as regards her wooing. It was undorned, perhaps, but the tale bore the hall-mark of simple verity.

“Then one day he came—one of a special embassy from St. James. I was, at the moment I saw him, I remember perfectly, talking with Ottilie von Hillen about the ball of the night before. It was that historic ball where Schülenritter shot his wife—you remember. Of course the world was agog with it, and how much more we who knew her well! Ottilie and I were speaking of it in whispers, for it had been put under ban as a topic of conversation, and as we were both trying to look very unconcerned in what we were saying, we let our eyes roam about the antechamber indifferently and waved our fans. Then I saw him, just opposite, looking at me, looking through me, and my eyes stopped on him, and we both knew that something very sweet and very terrible had happened. I looked away from him almost guiltily, and I remember as plainly as if it were yesterday that I could hardly understand why everything was going on about me just as if nothing had happened. Ottilie’s voice, even with its weight of thrilling scandal, never touched my sense again. He never moved away from his place, and every time I looked back at him—which was often, you may be sure—we fell deeper and deeper in love. It was not only that first evening, but every time that I saw him, we fell deeper and deeper in love. This was ten years ago, you must remember, and I was not so important then. Karl was not dead and Wilhelm had not been killed, and my cousin Rupert had not succumbed to the lingering malady of his mother’s house. I was a little girl of eighteen, hardly to be noticed except by a man or two and the Princess Helma, my fairy godmother. Well,

it seemed almost possible for a time. Helma was on our side, and she is mortally feared at home. She snorted and talked and badgered people about until we did get a sort of quasi-consent to our marriage. He was very rich and a noble—an Englishman, did I tell you that?—and as I said, I was an unimportant little girl. Well, Helma, who loves to watch a romance and yet is kindly enough to close her eyes at times, became mysteriously ill and decided to find a restful spot in Italy, where she could retire for a few months from the wearying nearness of court. She found—the Villa della Corona!" Her voice hushed and paused on the words, as if in naming it she blessed it. "It belonged then—and perhaps does now—to an Italian, Count Biolti, who was only too glad of a chance to rent it. It is, as you know, far off the beaten track. Helma pronounced for it, and then it suddenly became manifestly impossible for her to come here without me. There was no demurrer at this, but a stipulation was made I should not see my lover until my return. I think Helma gloried in that. A course of true love that ran quite smoothly would have had little interest in it for her, for, while she loves to have people happy, she wants to be the one to make them so. At any rate, she snorted—you would understand if you knew her just how she does that—in the beard of the imperial mandate and secretly arranged with Jock to get him here repeatedly.

"Jock! You will think that a strange little name? But perhaps not so much so to you as to us Germans. His real name is John, but his mother had called him by the other, and, well—we loved it better, he and I. How happy we were in this place—and, ah, then it did not look as it does now!—you know as well as I."

She broke off and looked at him. "How strange it is that you should know!" she said. She studied his face a moment or more, and then looked away again.

"We lived here, Helma and I, so happily, I with my love, she with her

surreptitious romance, until the blow fell. It was horrible! Wilhelm had been murdered at the railroad station just as he was coming home from shooting. You remember how cruel it was. Ten years ago! It seems—I was saying to Helma only a little while ago—it seems a thousand centuries. Helma tried to buoy me with hopes, but I knew only too well what it was going to mean to us. And I was right. Before we could even get away from this place to attend poor Wilhelm's obsequies a letter came declaring consent to my marriage with Jock impossible. It was hideous—unbearable, even though I knew it was coming. Jock and I parted here—no, the other phrase I used is much more true—we died here. We died here, Jock and I, and you have seen our ghosts."

Her voice sank to a whisper and she was so silent for a little while that but for an instinctive feeling that there was more, he might have thought she had finished.

"Picture to yourself," she went on in time, "the nave of a great cathedral, dim with thick incense and high-vaulted shadows, at one end the radiant whiteness of the altar with its constellated tapers, before its wide sacred steps the sable panoply of a prince's bier surrounded by his guards motionless, militant, the body of the church filled with kneeling, weeping people; hear for yourself the voice of the organ throbbing through the sonorous intonation of Latin prayers as if the atmosphere was shaken with the grief of unseen spirits; and you will know the burial of Wilhelm. To me, as I knelt there between Karl and dear Helma who was simply a cataract of tears, I felt as if they were saying the service too, for my dead heart and Jock's—as if Wilhelm and Jock and I had all been stricken down by the same assassin. Karl—poor Karl!—took my hand in his, as we knelt there. I think perhaps he felt that it would not be very long before these prayers and sobs would fall on his unhearing ears. Nor was it long. And now, you see"—she turned to

him with a smile that was three parts a tremulous attempt to control her lips—"I am a very important person indeed, and whom I marry is a matter for emperors to decide.

"Just why it should be so—I cannot understand. Destiny or chance, I suppose—it must be one or the other that makes us princesses or just women. I am what I am, and I can't escape it. But, oh, my God!—to be a woman, to be free, to be just Jock's woman——"

She rose to her feet, not abruptly but with a deliberate despair, and walked away from him again. Mitchell got up mechanically, but stood, his chin still on his breast, motionless.

Catarin went slowly as far as the villa steps, and there pausing, moved an insensible finger up and down the stone baluster a little while. Then she turned and came back as slowly.

"How long do you stay here?" she asked. It was one of the workaday questions that intrude even upon the house of death.

He lifted his head in a weary way. "I leave tonight," he said. "We drive to the coast where my yacht is waiting to take me to the steamer."

"Tonight!" she echoed slowly. "Then we are both saying good-bye to it, are we not?"

"You will never come again?"

"No!"

"Not even—in spirit?"

"No."

He moved a bit so that he might see the fountain. "I'm rather glad of that," he said, but wistfully. "It makes it easier for me to go. I didn't see how I was going to bear it—leaving her——"

"Her?"

"Oh—you— isn't it?" He almost smiled. "It is a bit uncanny."

She turned slowly about, looking around the entire rise of the terraces from the sunken garden. He knew that it was her good-bye.

"Shall I not leave you, Altess?"

"Oh, no, no!" She quite put her hand on his arm to detain him. "You

have been so good to me—I don't mind you at all; besides, the heartbreaking thing is that it is I who must leave, and at once." She drew a deep sigh. "It seems impossible to do. Yet it will never be any easier."

"I said the same thing today."

She answered him with a grateful look in the eyes.

"When you say leave—how did you get here? How do you go?"

"Helma is waiting for me in the carriage out there in the road. She is crying, I am sure. And I must not be selfish in my last agonizing indulgence. I must go at once."

"Will you not—it seems too practical an issue to raise just now, but life is so full of jarring notes that perhaps you are sufficiently accustomed to them to forgive this one; but may I not offer you something to refresh you? My man is quite marvelous at that kind of thing."

She shook her head. "Thank you—I think it is very good of you to have thought of it. But we are going to luncheon at the Palazzo Carbarini—only a few miles from here. We had to have an excuse, you see, Helma and I, for driving down so far today." She smiled a wan smile as she confessed the subterfuge. "We shall be driving back this afternoon, passing here—ah, dear heaven, *passing* here!—about dusk, I think. You see what a short parole one may obtain when one has become important."

She held out her hand, gloveless. "Good-bye," she said. "You know that I am grateful."

He took the hand, and held it quietly. "If you feel that in any way I have been of service to you——"

"As I do," she interpolated, lifting her face a little with the earnestness of her feeling.

"If you would like in any way to do a gracious thing for me——"

"As I would," she said.

"Then tonight, about dusk, as you are passing and as I am leaving this well-beloved spot, will you, for the last time, send the sweet vision of the young Catarin, as she has come before, that I

may carry the image away with me forever and forever?"

Her eyes had in their depths a startled look. She was silent a moment. "I will try," she said at last, the words scarcely audible.

He looked a moment longer into her lovely face, then bent his head and lifted her fingers to his lips. With her own native graciousness she laid her other hand for a mere instant on his head. Then, almost before he could believe it, he was standing alone, watching her as her white figure went slowly up the stairway of the terrace and at last disappeared into the Villa della Corona.

VII

FELIPPO, whose easygoing nature was beginning to know the unrest of the doer of evil, spent the day of the gracious lady's visit in something very much akin to misery. That she must have seen the Americano signor he knew. But just what she might have known or imparted concerning the gransignor's disposition that no one should occupy or trespass upon the park of the villa, he was sufficiently uncertain to cause him considerable discomfort. It was in the same impatience to face the worst that he had displayed in stopping the lady's carriage earlier in the day that he, in the late afternoon, walked slowly over to the pavilion, his cap in his hand and his heart between his teeth.

"The love of money is the root of all evil," said Felippo, and the touch of the coins in his pockets burned his fingers. And yet, for the first time in years the cheque from England had not come on its appointed day; and can a man live on nothing? An older hand at the gentle art of deception would not have been wrought so nervous over so slight a possibility of exposure as that a strange lady who knew the villa by name had driven in and had seen—he knew, of course!—the Americano signor, but it was quite enough for Felippo, whose mind was as a child's.

He approached the pavilion from the road that ran before it, the memorable spot where he and Maria had welcomed the signor and his terrible servant, and it disgusted him now to see this latter individual coming toward him from the path to the sunken garden. He never enjoyed a conversation with Gilbert—the giant lacked *esprit*!—but in this case there was no escape. Felippo—to conceal his irrepressible fear of the Britisher—approached with an easefulness he was far from inwardly enjoying.

"The signor—he is at home?"

"Very much at 'ome, I should say," replied Gilbert in English, not a word of which was comprehensible to Felippo. "Blyme—which may be vulgar, but certainly his a relief—if I ever see a man more wedded to a stone bench in hall my days."

"I do not understand English," said Felippo sweetly. "Could I see the signor, think you? Yes or no?"

"I should say you might," rejoined Gilbert, still in his native tongue. "Anybody might, for that matter, as he's a-sitting on that bench like a statue, and 'as been hever since the lady went away near five hours ago! But has to 'is seeing you, you little brown dog you, I should say it was more than himprobable."

Felippo, who gathered at least from the hostile tone of the reply that his effort to assure himself of the continuance of pleasant relations was likely to prove unsuccessful, was about to go away under as undaunted and cheerful colors as possible, when to his relief and to Gilbert's incalculable surprise Mitchell came unexpectedly and slowly up the steps from the garden and directly toward them.

"Felippo," he said, with a vagueness in his voice that announced the absence of his attention, "you are just the man I want to see."

"There is something wrong, signor? I—" He was sure now that his perfidy had been unveiled.

"Well, yes, there is a good deal that is wrong," said Mitchell, arousing a little. "But not here."

Gilbert was looking very severe indeed. "I don't know habout that either, sir," he put in, understanding Italian, though he superbly refused to speak it. "I think, sir, hif you will hexcuse me, that there is something wrong, right 'ere, when you goes without your luncheon a-sitting down in that 'ollow 'ole of a garden, and puts me hoff when I wishes to speak to you, as if I was less to be noticed than this 'ere Heyetalian."

Mitchell, who had coped with Gilbert's wounded *amour propre* before, and who knew the surest and easiest way to set all things right, quietly admitted his fault and agreed to be fed at once.

"You will heat in the 'ouse, sir?" pleaded Gilbert, who seemed to feel it a reflection on his master's position and his own that he should prefer to have his table spread in the common air of heaven.

But Mitchell was not for sacrificing himself utterly to mollify the difficult Gilbert. He shook his head, smiling. "The table in the old original place," he said firmly, "on the edge of the terrace by the side of the broken balustrade."

As the man went into the pavilion, contenting himself with this partial acceding to his authority, Felippo breathed more easily. Somehow—whatever might be the matter—he felt instinctively that the signor would be a more lenient judge than the signor's servant.

"I am going to leave today at dusk," said Mitchell, with unconscious abruptness.

Felippo dropped his cap at his feet. "The signor leaves!" he cried, a mingling of apprehension, of regret and of relief in his flexible voice.

"Yes, I am going away," reiterated Mitchell. "I have had a cable from New York. I want you to get Pedente, or somebody like him, to drive me and my servant and the luggage, as before, to the coast tonight."

Felippo stooped and picked up the cap, slapping it against his leg in a disheartened manner, to expel the

dust. "I much regret the signor's going," he said, not knowing in his heart whether it was strictly true. It would be worth something to be rid of the pain in his conscience. Still, the shining coins—Mary of heaven, it was a complex world!

"I, too, am sorry," said Mitchell. "And yet—it would all have been very different after today."

As Felippo understood this not a whit, he said nothing, and as the signor had partly turned and was staring silently at the pavilion, one might have heard a leaf fall to the ground during that space. But it was not as fairylike a sound that was to break the stillness which seemed to wait about them, as if Nature were holding her breath in expectancy. It was a noise that came from a distance and had claimed the attention of them both before either could recognize it. As it grew rapidly in volume and in distinction it revealed itself to be the rapid coughing of a speeding motor car. The sound increased as amazingly as an engine enlarges when it rushes down the perspective of its roadbed. Nearer and nearer, and louder and louder it thundered, coming with all the unexpected and irresistible dominance of a new power in the fate devised.

Whether Felippo had ever before seen such a vehicle of noise and terror, will probably never be known. As it came raging toward them he stood like one transfixed at Mitchell's side, his mouth open, and his eyes braced for its appearance. Then, as with an increased roar it came into view and tore over the road that lay between them, its long red body seemingly possessed of the very demons of speed, to come to a sudden paralyzed halt before the pavilion, Felippo gave one cry and departed, with the only show of animation he had ever exhibited in all the days of his stewardship. As his short rheumatic legs gathered unto themselves the wings of his lost youth, and scattered the dust of the road in his breathless retreat, a tall man in the tonneau rose and looked after him;

then with a look of great perplexity and considerable annoyance, turned and surveyed Mitchell and the pavilion.

Mitchell, who stood good-naturedly looking on, was forced to smile at the sudden change in the *dramatis personæ* of the little scene. The hurtling entrance of the strangers and the enthusiastic exit of Felippo amused him—who was easily amused. Gilbert had been drawn out by the noise and now stood in the doorway, a bouquet of knives and forks in one hand and the spotless folds of the linen cloth over his other arm.

There were two men in the front seats of the car, one the chauffeur, and the other a most diminutive Japanese, who caught Mitchell's attention by leaping nimbly down and running back to let the tall gentleman out of the tonneau. This important individual—the Jap treated him with as much caution and gentleness as if he had been his weight in Peachblow porcelain—was evidently very ill, or had recently so been, but for all that showed the build of a stalwart and exceedingly handsome man. He descended from his seat slowly, and almost without removing his eyes from the two in the pavilion grounds. It was evident, too, that—either as a result of illness or as a matter of temperament—he flushed when annoyed, and that he was just that and something more at present.

He came forward, with the anxious little valet at his elbow.

"May I inquire, sir, your business here?" he demanded rather violently.

"You might—er—tell me yours, don't you think?" inquired Mitchell amiably. "It would seem to an unprejudiced observer—and as there isn't one here I shall have to volunteer for the part—that yours is the invading party."

The flush in the man's face—and Mitchell had just seen that it was a much younger face than he had thought at a distance—deepened with a fresh access of rage. The Jap, who was looking intently and somewhat anxiously upward as if in fear of over-

excitement for the invalid, laid a hand on his arm to recall the need for the repression of all emotion. The tall fellow nodded shortly and shook off the little brown fingers. The red ebbed a little in his cheeks before he answered.

"I happen to be the owner of this place," he said then, still somewhat fiercely.

Mitchell promptly went forward. "You are to be congratulated," he said, with a pleasant geniality. To his surprise the man's face blazed red again and his voice shook with his anger as he retorted: "You are unnecessarily familiar, sir. Be good enough to explain your presence here."

The little Japanese valet here lifted up his voice. He had a telegraphic brevity in the construction of his communications. "My lord—sick man—his house—get out." As this diminutive champion entered the lists at one side, Gilbert, the Goliath, *sans esprit*, stepped in at the other.

"Mr. Mitchell is but just recovering from an illness 'imself, I'd 'ave you know, and 'e is not to be haddressed such himpudence from any hinsignificant fragment of the Yellow Peril, has you are."

Mitchell motioned him sharply to silence.

"Your manner as a landlord is very probably doomed to failure," said he, always unmoved by the surprises of the situation. "I have rented this pavilion, I have paid for it, I have not done it the slightest damage, and I'll be hanged if I can see what you are so stuffy about."

"Rented the pavilion? Rented—this?" The fellow pointed at the place with a cane as if the identification were necessary, as if the assertion were incredible.

"Just so," bowed Mitchell.

"I should think so, hindeed," growled Gilbert, but half subdued. He clashed the silver in his hand with a calm proprietorship, and walked away with the air of an old family retainer, around the house and toward the table. It was only his stern idea

of putting these others into their places that induced him to leave the scene of action at just this dramatic moment.

The newcomer seemed to have become more quiet. "You leased the place from Felippo, I suppose?"

"From Felippo, yes," said Mitchell.

The other bit his lip a moment or two angrily. "This is the first I have heard of it," he said. "Felippo had no right to do this. I wouldn't have rented the place, not for—'a wilderness of monkeys,'" he ended, with a half-smile.

Mitchell was instantly distressed, and his face showed it. "I beg ten thousand pardons," he said earnestly. "I had no idea—I would not have intruded for anything—I regret my presence exceedingly—I cannot, why, I cannot express to you——"

The indignant proprietor suddenly laughed a little. "That was why he ran so hard," he said. "I suppose you paid him a fair price. There is nothing in the world so dishonest as a dishonest Italian, I believe."

Mitchell's forehead was still corrugated with his concern. "I certainly think there is no person more fit to put a man into a false position, but I suppose the temptation was too much for his slender resistance—it probably hasn't been sufficiently exercised in this lack-devil atmosphere to be in a very robust condition. You see, I *did* pay him a very fair price!" He smiled a little, as if for a momentary relief from his expression of distress.

The proprietor of the erst-disputed pavilion was still standing, biting his lips in a way that denoted as much indecision as displeasure. The Jap had retired slowly to the machine, and was now pulling out its fitted luggage. The chauffeur, who took, according to his kind, no faintest interest in any event, however unusual, that was not connected with the engine that he drove, was visible only at intervals as he arose from mysterious concealments in and about the machinery. Gilbert, at the moment, returned from setting the table by the broken balustrade, and his

polite eyebrows sufficiently spoke his amazement at finding the strangers had had the audacity to remain. As he passed behind Mitchell and apparently unseen by him, his presence was revealed to his master in the sudden contortion of hostility that convulsed the features of the little Japanese, on whom apparently Gilbert's luckless phrase of "hinsignificant fragment of the Yellow Peril" had not been lost.

"Is that you, Gilbert?"

The noiseless footfall on the shorn grass ceased. "Yes, sir."

"We will not wait until dusk before starting for the coast, Gilbert," said Mitchell, keeping his eyes on the tall man's face, watching it flush again. "We will go earlier than we planned this afternoon. Are we all packed up?"

It was something in the nature of a bitter humiliation to Gilbert, in the face of the triumphant Jap. "We are, sir," he admitted, with a gulp.

"Then bring me my hat and stick. I will go on to the padre's and wait for you to get Pedente and the carriage."

"And your luncheon, Mr. Mitchell?"

"We won't bother with that, I think."

Gilbert paused a moment to control his shaking voice. "Very good, sir," he said slowly, and passed into the pavilion.

There was something very like suspense in the situation. The lord of the pavilion had turned away a little, as if to avoid meeting Mitchell's steady look. He had grown very white, and the Jap was watching him, on the alert for some further symptom of collapse. Mitchell waited quietly until Gilbert brought him the required impedimenta of the pedestrian. Then, taking them both from him, with a mere word of command for despatch, he went slowly nearer and past his unconsenting landlord. Here he stopped and turned, and the two men were facing each other.

"I am addressing Lord Bannistair, am I not?"

The other made a movement with

his lips, inaudible, but apparently assenting.

"Thank you. My name is Anthony Mitchell. I take it that you have done me the honor to accept my apology for the most unknowing offense I ever committed. Good afternoon."

He made a motion with the hat he was holding, as if he lifted it from his head. His mouth was set a little angrily as he turned to go.

"Mr. Mitchell?" said Bannistair.

Mitchell turned silently.

"I beg you to forget what has just passed," said Bannistair, his clear English voice making itself heard in sincerity and manliness. "I have been pampered so long as a sick man that a jarring of wills is calculated to upset me abominably. And moreover"—he seemed to force himself to exonerate his better self—"I was under a great strain in coming here at all, as the place has for me a powerful influence in its associations. Your presence here—you will forgive me for my frankness—was like the profanation of a sacred solitude. The feeling has passed utterly and I have regained my poise at the same time. It is for me to make the apology, and I trust you will do me the honor to remain as my guest until your prearranged departure."

He held out his hand.

Mitchell took it promptly with a clearing smile. "You come down handsomely!" he said, much approval in his tone.

Bannistair smiled too. "One needs to excel at something," he replied. "Sumi, you may take those inside. You were just about to have luncheon, Mr. Mitchell? Do you suppose your man can find enough for two? I'm rather hungry after our spin, and it's high time for tea, anyway. What strange hours you keep!"

"Not habitually," said Mitchell. "If you will excuse me, I will speak to Gilbert."

"Sumi will tell him," rejoined Bannistair. "I'd rather you stayed. You see"—the whimsical smile lighted his face again—"how childishly insistent and inconsistent I have become!"

"Have you been ill long?"

"Months! It seems a pity to have so successful an illness, only to have it fizzle out at the end."

"Fizzle out?"

"You can't deny that as an illness it is a failure." Bannistair was looking about him slowly. "I see another reason why Felippo ran away from me," he said. "We have both been taken in, Mr. Mitchell. There ought to be a bond in that. I have paid the creature well for nine years to keep the place in order. I imagined it, while I was slowly cooking my soul in India, as a cool, green, fair and orderly oasis in the desert of life. It looks—it looks——"

"It looks as if Felippo thought you were never coming back to it again."

Bannistair seemed to turn away a little. "He could have been no more sure of it than I, when I went away from it. It is curious, is it not, how we come back to these places! I could not, could not have refused to come."

"It is a long time since you were here, I am sure," said Mitchell, "for the place shows its years of neglect. You remember the sunken garden?"

"I do," said the other very slowly and after a long pause.

"It is quite overgrown with weeds."

"In a little, I will go and look at it. But just now, if you will excuse me, if you will call Sumi, I will go into the house. I am afraid the long drive has been more of a tax than I expected—that and the amazing conclusion." He tried to smile, but his steadily paling lips would not. "Didn't your man say—by the way, a countryman of mine, eh?—that you had been ill, too?"

"I believe he did volunteer that information," replied Mitchell. "But I have thoroughly recovered. It was nothing but a nervous breakdown after steering us through two successive panics. If the Villa della Corona——"

"God!" said Bannistair, in a sharp whisper.

Mitchell jumped nearer. "You are suffering," he said. "Just like a damned Englishman. Why didn't you tell a man? Sumi! Hey!"

"Not at all, not at all—it is nothing." He put out his hand, however, on Mitchell's proffered arm. "You were saying something about the—Villa della Corona." He brought the name out slowly and in a softer tone as if he blessed it as he said it.

"Only that if it does for you what it has for me, you will soon be well," Mitchell replied, keeping an anxious watch on the man's face.

The small thick figure of Sumi, looking all the thicker and smaller for being near the tall, slender men of another blood, came hurrying toward him.

"Standing bad—make sick—need drink—take rest," he said succinctly.

Weary as he was Bannistair laughed boyishly. "It would have cost me thirty words to say that," he commented, as he transferred his heavy hand to the square shoulder of his little valet. "I'll just go in and freshen up a bit, Mitchell. I take it from your man's coming out with the cloth and things that you are lunching *al fresco*. I shall not be long, don't you know, pulling myself together. Don't wait for me. It is growing later every moment, and you must be ravening."

"I won't harass you by waiting," said Mitchell sensibly. "Tell Gilbert to show you to my—to the room I used as a dressing-room. I imagine it has been made more habitable just by being lived in for a while. It always seemed to me that long-vacant rooms lost the art of being homelike just from lack of practice." He moved along beside them slowly, as they made their way toward the pavilion, Sumi artfully preventing any slightest haste by taking slow, short steps as if unutterably borne down by the weight of his master's dependence. "And come out when you can, for before long I should be going, if Pedente does me the honor to come with an animal which does not die before it gets here."

As if inspired by the light words, Bannistair stopped and turned back in the very act of crossing the threshold.

"Cartier!" he called, and one could

see from this mere ghost of a cry with what a volume of voice he could have spoken before the curse of India broke upon him. But as it was now, the chauffeur, buried head and shoulders in the machine, made no sign of having heard it.

"Cartier!" cried Sumi enormously.

Instantly the head and shoulders appeared, and the man thrust out his chin as if to hear better, walking slowly toward them all the time.

"Tell him to be ready to take Mr. Mitchell to the coast tonight," said Bannistair, not attempting to raise his voice again.

"Get ready—short run—tonight!" cannonaded Sumi, and Cartier nodded in his capable, respectful way, waited an instant to see if there was anything further to be said, and, waiting in vain, returned gladly to the car and dived into it once more.

"I thank you," said Mitchell, as his host turned back to go in. "It is a true compliment, that!—you make it possible for me to remain with you a few hours longer."

VIII

WHEN the Lord Bannistair was gone into the house, Mitchell, who, having ordered something to eat without wanting it, now found the time of waiting for it intolerably long in spite of its attendant excitement, strolled down into the road and took a look at the car. Cartier, being, just to add to the gaiety of their nationalities, a Frenchman, tore himself away from his absorbing researches in the internal mechanism long enough to bow his very best French bow. For all that he had been born in Paris, and had grown from boyhood to manhood in the making and handling of the unsurpassable motors of his country, Cartier could speak English with the best of them, and had spent long, gratifying months in the States in comparing American cars with his, and in being arrested for exceeding the speed limit; so that, knowing an

American man almost as readily as he would know an American car, he addressed Mitchell in that tongue.

"Beaut, eh?"

"It appears," said Mitchell, "to be a remarkably handsome auto."

Cartier's face fell a little.

"Know anything about them?"

"Not a thing, except that I am going to have one," replied Mitchell sadly.

Cartier's face became still longer. He looked at Mitchell, hesitating between contempt for the outsider and interest in a possible commission.

"What are you tinkering at?" asked the outsider.

"Silencer," vouchsafed Cartier, looking a shade more hopeful.

"Ah," sighed Mitchell carelessly. "I shouldn't know a silencer from a phonograph."

After this nothing further could possibly be needed. Cartier took one supercilious look at Mitchell, and then with a convulsive jerk at both cuffs, dived down again and paid no more heed to him than a king would pay to a cat.

This individual, however, being far more hungry than he ever dreamed, having had, all the time of his supposed interest in the car, one eye on the pavilion, and having seen Gilbert at last emerge from the doorway with a promising tray, had promptly departed, and was even in the moment making his way toward the broken balustrade at the top of the terrace where the table was spread.

Gilbert was engaged, when he reached the spot, in giving those extraordinary and unnecessary touches to the dishes and silver that men of his craft find mysteriously necessary to the perfecting of a table. It seems sometimes to those not versed in the secrets of this brotherhood that the separate articles are merely lightly encouraged to maintain their positions, that they are not actually moved one hair's breadth. But considering the extreme stress laid upon the ceremony by those who know, this conclusion may be said to be reached

by those ignorant of the subtler conditions.

Mitchell took his place with a contented sigh, and unfolded his napkin upon his knee. Gilbert set before him on a silver tray the four slender quarters of a golden Spanish melon.

"Well, Gilbert," said Mitchell pleasantly, "what is your opinion of the new landlord? New—I mean—in point of discovery."

"A hodd man, and given to sudden turns since 'is hillness, I should say, sir. But—well, a Hinglishman, Mr. Mitchell."

"And they can do no wrong, eh, Gilbert? Sudden turns, now—what might they be? You don't grow melons like this in England, anyway!"

"Well, sir, I should say as 'ow 'is manner of greeting you was on the turning horder, sir. And as for 'is hactions in your room, sir!"

"No longer mine, alas, Gilbert! And what sort of actions, now, characterized his occupancy of that regretted apartment?"

"Why, sir, the most hextraordinary!" exclaimed the man. It became evident that he had been bursting with the concealed story long before Mitchell had asked him the first question. "That little 'eathen, sir, came hup with 'im for all the world, sir, if you will hexcuse me, like a little tug bringing in a hocean liner, and in they goes and me just be'ind them. Hall your things, sir, I 'ad took out and packed, meaning to leave heverything just as we found it, barring the dust, sir, which I will say is gone. Well, sir, as I goes in I noticed that the paper print of the lady, sir, is still hon the wall."

At this point Gilbert paused—perhaps excusably—for breath; but Mitchell, who had been paying little heed to the story, suddenly stopped with a spoonful of the luscious fruit halfway to his mouth and lifted his eyes as if interested. Gilbert arranged the bit of linen on his tray somewhat excitedly, and, reinforced by the deep breath and his master's obviously riveted attention, went on with his story.

"Well, Mr. Mitchell, sir, no sooner

does 'is lordship see what I'm a-making for, hintending to take it down, sir, and put it hamong your things in case you wants it, than 'e stops dead short and 'e says, in a voice for hall the world, sir, like the ghost in the pantomime at Drury Lane, 'e says, 'Wot is that?' 'e says. So, thinking no 'arm, I hanswers that it's just a picture from the *News* that you cut hout this morn-ing, sir, and I starts to go out."

The suspended fragment of melon found its way absently into Mitchell's mouth. "Well?" he said, fairly indistinctly.

"Well, sir, as I passes 'is lordship, 'e puts out 'is 'and and 'e says, 'Let me see it,' 'e says, sir. So, naturally—wot else could I do, sir?—I 'ands it to 'im."

Gilbert had the unconscious art of keeping his listener in suspense. But Mitchell, who did not care for that kind of mental excitement, dropped his spoon into his plate with a clatter and leaned back in his chair. "For the love of liberty, Gilbert, go on! Get to the point. When and why did he have the 'turn'?"

"Right then and there, though I can't satisfy you with the why of it, sir. 'E takes one look at the picture and then, for hall the little 'eathen tries to stop him, 'e slips hout of 'is 'old and hinto a chair, and 'is face is as green as the grass at your feet."

"The deuce you say!"

"The deuce I says, begging your pardon, sir. And the little 'eathen 'e tells me to get hout and go to 'ell, for all as if 'e was a full-grown man, sir. And while I couldn't hoblige 'im about the hother, sir, I certainly could remove my hodious presence when so required, and that same I did, sir, coming away so friendly and prompt on the hasking that I clean forgot the picture of the lady."

Mitchell, still extended in his chair, rammed his hands into both pockets and stared frowning at the table. He was conscious of a feeling of biting, gnawing jealousy. Damn this interloping proprietor! Was it possible that he, too, had been graciously per-

mitted a sight of his dear, impossible ghost? The brute had confessed to having owned the place for nine years, to having associations, confound him, associations with it that exerted over him a powerful influence. The very charming quality of the man made it so supremely possible. If he could only have turned it off with a "What, that chuckle-headed ass?" it would have been something quite bearable. But there was no earthly reason for supposing that Bannistair would be denied any inner vision that might make itself visible to him, no reason to believe that Bannistair was not, to use her own words, "in tune" as well as he. He fairly ground his teeth as he thought of it. Perhaps Bannistair had stood, as he had, transfixed at the first vision of her; had watched her breathlessly as she moved down into the garden from the terraces; had felt his heart melt and run like wax as he had, in the pure light of her beauty; had listened, ravished, to the sound of purling, bubbling water in the dry basin of the fountain; had seen her lips part and her eyes brighten at the approach of her young lover; had breathed, as he had, the breath of her sheaf of golden roses the while she leaned from the window as the Blessed Damosel leaned out from the gold bar of heaven.

With a sudden, furious exclamation he jumped to his feet. Men had been run through the body for a slighter presumption. Damn the fellow, how dared he?

The rage changed abruptly into a half-contrite laugh. He dropped into the chair again, conscious that Gilbert, although apparently busied in changing the table accessories for his next culinary achievement, had noted every twitch of his jealous mood and might well be wondering upon what romantic mystery he had stumbled inadvertently. Mitchell laid his napkin across his knee again, with as steady a touch as he could muster, and turned his head to look with an appearance of heedlessness into the garden. After all, it was by no virtue of his that he

had been "in tune" to see what he had, and by the same token it could not be laid to Bannistair's responsibility that he had seen what he undoubtedly had. And more than all, men were not, as a matter of fact, run through the body for seeing a beautiful and passionately beloved ghost.

Mitchell coughed and turned his attention to the soup. "I quite forgot to cable Haskell," he said, as in explanation of his late irritation. Gilbert merely bowed without answering. Gilbert had learned to reverence the lies of gentlemen.

Also had he learned to hold his tongue when not encouraged to use it; and, as Mitchell's interest in his descriptive powers seemed to have been eclipsed by subsequent self-absorption, Gilbert stood by silent while his master abstractedly ate his luncheon.

It was during this punctilious space that "the little heathen" came around the corner of the pavilion toward them, carrying a tea-basket of evident solidity and weight as lightly on his shoulder as if it had been an empty box. This he deposited on the ground near the table and opened, disclosing as compact and complete an equipment for the making of the cheering beverage as the combined imaginations of a dainty old housekeeper, a fussy collector of rare china and a methodical yacht-builder could have devised. Mitchell, roused and interested by the charming toy, motioned Gilbert to make clear the space on the other side of the table and watched as piece after piece of the fittings of the wonderful basket came to light and was ranged at the other corner in artistic convenience. Sumi's little brown hands, with their delicate infallibility, set out one porcelain cup, hesitated a moment, glanced at Mitchell with a flicker of appraisal in his eye, and then lifted another cup from its well-padded niche.

Mitchell noted the concession, and smiled. "That is remarkably fragile china to carry about, is it not?"

"For my lord—the best," replied Sumi. It was his simple rule of life. He was deftly putting together the

pieces of the little samovar, working so swiftly without any show of haste that, in a mere magician's pause, the completed vessel was standing on the table, its dragon-like throat full of glowing charcoal. He looked up, caught Mitchell's eye and smiled.

"Electric quicker—lord find bad!" he said, with a shrug of the wide, square shoulders, so absurdly out of proportion with his insufficient height. "Make toast—lord find good!" With this brief explanation of the inconsistencies of his lord, the smiling little brown man unfolded a brilliant nickel puzzle, attached to it a wire that ran from one end of the magic basket, and, after cutting a couple of slices of bread so thin they might have waved in the breeze, proceeded to toast them over his black-art, invisible fire, turning them frequently as they became a golden brown. Both Mitchell and Gilbert were so interested in this process—for the demonstration of which Sumi would in another century have been burned at the stake—that they did not notice the approach of Lord Bannistair until he was well-nigh dropping into his chair.

"You are to be congratulated," said Mitchell for the second time that day. "I thought the days of the magic lamp and its attendant genius were over and gone."

"Sumi does very well," replied Bannistair somewhat wearily, and the little brown man twinkled with pleasure at this languid praise. Mitchell, at the tone of the man's voice, gave him another, sharper look. He was very pale, and the old, gaunt look under and about his eyes seemed to have increased. But there was something new in the expression, as well. It was not merely that the physical depression was more marked, but that the man looked mentally ill, sick to his very soul, as if his spiritual heart were slowly bleeding him to his death.

"I am afraid you are overtaxing yourself," said Mitchell apprehensively.

Bannistair leaned his elbow on the balustrade and his head on his hand.

"It doesn't matter," he answered carelessly. "I am constrained to apologize for being such very poor company."

"Nonsense—behave just as you please. Is it going to disturb you if I smoke?"

"Not in the least," said Bannistair. "I smoke, myself."

It was evident that he did, for at the very word Sumi was shielding in his practiced palm a lighted match and presenting it to the tip of Mitchell's cigarette, while Gilbert glowered at a helpless distance. To Mitchell's amazement, as the little Jap came close to him, he whispered calmly, "Talk—cheer up," and neither of them gave a sign that such a message had passed between them.

Mitchell, as he blew the first smoke into the air, which was growing more chilly as the sun went down, laughed lightly and reminiscently. "I am wondering," he said in response to Bannistair's lifted eyes, "when and where Felippo stopped running. He was certainly doing penance for all his days of idleness when I lost sight of him!"

Bannistair smiled faintly, as he watched Sumi preparing the tea. Gilbert, in high dudgeon at the amount of interest bestowed upon the little 'eathen and his evil works, had withdrawn his hodious presence and gone within doors.

"The wretched little villain seems to have absorbed the modern principles of graft."

Bannistair straightened in his chair somewhat and looked over the sunken garden. "When I bought this place of Count Biolti," he said, and Mitchell immediately experienced a little thrill of memory in the sound of the name, "it was one of the most exquisite gardens of all Italy. The count was something of a horticulturist, although too poor in pocket ever to have indulged very extensively in that expensive amusement. There used to be, I remember, myriad bushes of a certain rose, a great favorite of his—as yellow as a crown. I never smelled such a fragrant rose anywhere else in all my

life. Two or three would perfume a whole room and leave the air sweet for hours after they were gone." Mitchell caught himself on the point of assent, and almost held his breath. "Then there were, too, I remember, some very beautiful lilies growing in the basin down there, some that he brought himself from somewhere—he told me about it, but I have forgotten. They were very white and sweet, like stars, don't you know?"

Mitchell could not have helped it to save his life. "Very white and sweet, like stars," he repeated. "Why, yes, the description is perfect."

"Ah, but these pond-lilies were really most remarkable," insisted Bannistair quietly. "Poor things, they died of thirst, I suppose. That infernal brigand! If you could see the letters I have had from him telling how clean the villa and pavilion were, how exquisite the gardens, how trim the walks, how smooth the terraces. If you could read the wealth of detail that he lavished on my credulous ears, you would expect to see—as I expected to see—the garden of a midsummer vision. I can't express to you the feeling it has wrought in me—to find this place so absolutely neglected. At first I was horribly angry—I presume you will recall that! I could have sewed you and Felippo in a gunny-sack together and flung you from here into the sea. But now, do you know, my feeling has entirely changed. There is something very fitting"—he began to speak more slowly—"very fitting, though full of heartbreaking comparisons, in the obliterated beauty of this place. People forget—why should not the garden?" His voice lingered on the last word, and ceased.

Mitchell, who had forgotten Sumi's command, sat silent, too, save for the drawing of his breath through his cigarette, which now, as the twilight fell about them, burned brighter and brighter in contrast to the gloom.

Bannistair had not touched his tea, and Sumi had withdrawn to a distance and was engaged in rubbing a tiny

unfinished bit of cloisonné with emery cloth. Sumi had his own dilettante fads.

The dim gray light of the first faint evening hours deepened slowly as they sat in this silence. Mitchell lighted another cigarette with the ashes of the old, as the phoenix arises from the fire. He offered one to his companion, who refused it courteously but without speaking.

The shadows grew longer and darker in the sunken garden, but the after-glow lingered in a misty radiance on the opposite terrace and on the beautiful face of the villa. Shy stars appeared and disappeared in the still illumined sky, and the white moon was not yet alight.

"Oh, my God!" whispered the Lord Bannistair, almost inaudibly. It seemed to be wrung from him against his struggling will. Mitchell heard it, faint as it was, and heard in it the tone of an agony that matched well the look he had seen in the man's face. But he made no sign of having heard, and the silence, lifted for a moment like a curtain, fell again between them.

Sumi, going indoors to continue his dainty labor, passed them like a grotesque shade.

The dusk deepened about them, as they sat beside the broken balustrade. A faint stirring air had begun lightly to move. The stars no longer coquetted in the sky, but shone steadily and crisply through the dark blue of their translated ether. The moon had turned silver and luminous, and the garden below them was full of mellow light.

Suddenly—Mitchell's heart stopped beating with a cruel jerk, and then leaped forward at a painful gallop—the sound of bubbling, curling, plashing water came distinctly, unmistakably to his ears from the direction of the dry basin below. It was the herald of her coming, that last coming that she had promised him with her own lips that very day. The drunken exaltation possessed him again. He should see her, he should see her!

"I say, do you hear the sound of

running water?" inquired Bannistair weakly.

Mitchell's wild exultation underwent the blow bravely. "Do you?" he said uncertainly.

"Of course I do—don't you? What the deuce is it? The fountain is dry—I can see from here that it is dry!"

Mitchell rose in his excitement. "Wait—wait—hush!" he said imperiously, almost forgetting the other man entirely. He stepped to the balustrade and looked breathlessly, almost fearfully.

She was coming for the last time. A rare, exalted quietude fell upon him as he saw her appear upon the steps of the terrace opposite. Her white draperies fell about her feet in pretty dignity as she moved slowly down into the garden. About her head and shoulders a white scarf was twisted, a tissue so gossamer that where the faint-stirring air lifted it, it seemed to melt into the atmosphere like mist.

Mitchell heard Bannistair's low cry of amazement and was aware that the man had risen to his feet, incredulous as he himself had once been. He did not turn. He did not wish to lose one single instant of her presence.

With a directness that had no haste and no purpose, she moved slowly down the stair and crossed the garden to the fountain-side. Here she paused, standing in that perfection of ease so rare among women, and the monotonous, unmistakable murmuring of water came continuously toward him.

He was aware, without giving it his slightest attention, that Bannistair's breath was coming and going in painful gasps.

After a moment, the gracious figure in the garden below moved with a beauty that held his eye imperiously, around the overgrown border of the fountain's rim, and there at one point paused again and knelt down. One hand on the basin and the other reaching within, she picked a great white waxy water flower and held it near her face to breathe its lily sweetness. Then with all the seriousness of the child that she was, she twisted

the long, pliant stem of the blossom into a circlet and gravely crowned herself with it. The dark stem drew a line about her sweet, proud head, confining her scarf, and at one side close to her temple and cheek the great flower, white and sweet as a star, buckled it in place.

Then she turned, and the clear moonlight fell full upon her lifted face as she looked up, directly toward them.

With a sob, Bannistair stumbled forward, his arms outstretched. "Catarin—my little love—look—look—it is Jock, Catarin—" The sobbing voice stuck fast in his throat with a queer, terrifying sound, as he pitched forward upon the great stone balustrade. Mitchell caught him up partially in his arms. Sumi, on an instinctive alarm, was already running to his assistance.

The garden below was empty, and the sound of the murmuring water was silent forever, for she had come and gone for the last time.

IX

THERE are times of crisis in a man's life when he acts almost unconsciously, when something wiser and stronger than himself seems to seize upon him as a medium for communication and accomplishment, as the helmsman directs his ship to the succor of another. As a rule, the very acts themselves, and certainly the mental process of decision, pass absolutely from the memory, leaving the events of the crisis buried in the midst of forgetfulness. So Mitchell could never be sure what happened between the moment of Bannistair's swooning on the terrace and the time when he found himself sitting beside Cartier in the car, being hurried along the road from the villa at a speed calculated to bring a dead man to his senses with apprehension.

As a matter of fact, what he had done was little enough and simple enough. He had held Bannistair in his arm and had reached for the little liqueur glass at his own place at table, slipping from

its edge into the man's mouth the last few drops of the cognac. Then Sumi had reached his side, and taken the sufferer from him in a way that it was a great pity to forget. For the little brown man had laid the big white man on his wide shoulder with the tenderness of an immensity of strength, and had carried him calmly and naturally into the pavilion.

Mitchell, overwhelmed by the revelation of the man's cry, his words to the fair white vision of the garden, was scarcely aware of what Sumi had done. But Gilbert, whom they passed on the terrace, the little 'eathen and his great burden, saw, and with all an Hinglishman's adoration of pure strength and pluck, went over to the enemy, horse, foot and dragoons, in an unconditional surrender. He followed them into the house, and offered his aid, which after a little hostile silence was grudgingly accepted. The insignificant fragment of the Yellow Peril was not quick to forgive, but if he was slow he was thorough.

Mitchell had stood, planted like a church, as Cartier might have trenchantly expressed it in his own native tongue, with his back to the garden, his face staring into the recesses of the path by which Sumi had gone carrying his master, the little liqueur glass almost dropping from his loosened fingers, and his mind struggling to swim, like a drowning creature, in the sea of this tremendous discovery. What it was he thought of, what he decided to do, he could not then have said. But Cartier, less disturbed by the fainting of a sick man than he would have been by a puncture in a tire, could have told that he was aroused from a semi-somnolent condition and exceedingly gratified at the same time by the sudden appearance of Mitchell at his side, and the order, "Take me, like the devil, down the main road."

As Mitchell sprang in, Cartier sprang out and gave a couple of vindictive twists to a thing that the outsider would have likened to a stove-shaker. Instantly the car began to throb and cough, but with a certain insolent con-

sciousness of its own power. Cartier leaped lightly back again, and the noise grew less and less as the engine directed its power more and more exclusively to "getting there." They turned about in the road until, facing the way it had come, the car gathered itself obediently and shot forward into the night.

It was then that Mitchell's unseen manager forsook him, and he found himself thrown back on his own responsibility. It was somewhat like being sent to sea with sealed orders. He was bound surely on an important mission, but one not at all clearly defined. He mentally paused to consider the intention that had impelled him already so far on the way. It was to overtake the carriage of the grand duchess—there was no uncertainty about that. But once having done so—what then?

They tore through the darkness with their long blade of light cutting the way ahead as a sword might split a black curtain. The rushing air lifted Mitchell's hair—Cartier had so little!—and beat him on the forehead as if it urged him to think, think, prepare, decide.

At the intersecting of the highway Cartier soothed the machine into a slower pace. "Which way?"

"To the right," answered Mitchell. "They must be near. And if they have gone by and we don't meet them going this way, we can easily overtake them."

The great locomotive veered the corner and thundered on. "What make of car?" asked the Frenchman, peering forward as he leaned over the wheel.

"Not a car," replied Mitchell. "A very sedate and elaborate coach with two sedate and elaborate horses."

"Oh," said Cartier, losing at least three-fourths of his interest in the expedition. The car slowed down again a little, as if his indifference had been unconsciously communicated to the machine.

When perhaps two miles of road had been whipped from under their wheels as one could draw a ribbon swiftly backward, Mitchell drew breath con-

clusively. "About face," said he. "They must have passed the villa road before we started in pursuit."

With all manner of audible protestations and catarrhal difficulty, the car reversed its order in the narrow road, and started back with a grunt of disgust to retrace its way. When their heralding shaft of light brought out from the darkness of the shadowed roadway the pillared entrance to the villa road, Cartier spoke again. "Straight on?"

"Straight on!" Mitchell corroborated, and the white gateway became a thing far behind them.

The highway presently ran out from the sheltering trees into the full moonlight, and as here the way lay "straight on" for some distance, it was possible to see the coach of the grand duchess, like an exquisite little toy, about a mile ahead of them. Its forward action, however, was not only imperceptible, but because of their own scuttling speed seemed actually reversed, as if the carriage, growing rapidly from the most Lilliputian proportions into the ample dignity of a coach of state, were being drawn backward to them by some irresistible force. Indeed, so brief was the time in which they traversed the space between the two vehicles that the deliberate German on the box found just time enough to guide his sedate and elaborate horses nearer the side of the road to allow passage for the car, coming up behind them for all the world like a well-directed cannon ball. The car shot a length or two ahead of them, and there stopped, panting hard for breath, and the whole proceeding was much to the distaste of the grand duchess's horses, who, if they did appear fat and Teutonic, had somewhat the irritability of temper of an overfed curmudgeon of that race, as if they lived on the same kinds of pastry.

As earlier in the day, a head appeared at the carriage window and inquired the trouble. But it was not the head of the Princess Helma, for that had long ago leaned back among the traveling-cushions and for some time

past had been snoring with a gentle pulsation of comfort and repose. It was the grand duchess who leaned out. She had taken off her little hat, and the moonlight falling on her uncovered hair showed it to be yellow like ripe corn. Although the airy footman had reached her side as promptly as Puck himself could have done, Mitchell was already approaching the coach, and she had eyes for him alone.

He came forward hurriedly. "Do not take alarm," he said in German. "It is only I, Anthony Mitchell, from the villa."

"You!" she cried very softly. "What is it?"

He did not at once reply to this. At a sign from him the footman withdrew and mounted to his place again. Mitchell approached the door from which she leaned. Her right arm lay along the top of the fallen window, leaving her fingers in the white light bare and pure.

"I want to speak to you," said Mitchell, as a somewhat superfluous explanation. "May I do so—here and now?"

She leaned her head back against the frame of the window and looked up at him. Between her clear, slender brows was a little tangle of wrinkles, that showed in the moonlight her perplexity. "You may," she answered. And then because after a moment he did nothing of the kind she asked him softly, "Did you—did you think you saw me tonight? In the garden? I tried so hard to go! And yet I was afraid that just that would spoil it, don't you see?"

Mitchell bowed his head. "I saw—her," he assented.

"Yes—her!" she agreed, with a little sigh.

"I want to tell you something about her, if I may."

"You may," she said again.

Mitchell drew a deep breath, as he looked directly into the pale sweetness of her face. "I love her," he said quietly.

She made no motion, said no word. Only her eyes grew an infinitesimal

space wider as they watched his face.

"It may sound rather like dining on the odor of a rose to say one loves the mere mental spirit of a woman made mysteriously manifest, but it is just that that is a symbol of her—do you understand? I'm afraid I'm not making it very plain; but then, how can I?"

He was silent a moment and then very gently he touched her hand. "I don't want to say what is going to hurt you, even though I am sure you would not let it make you angry."

She did not move beneath his touch or his look. "Say it," she commanded softly.

"I love the girl you were," he answered, obedient to her wishes if still anxious as to the result. She did not flinch, but their eyes held one another steadily, and he went on: "Shall I tell you about her? Of course, she is very young, hardly more than a child in some things, but she has the qualities that are better than experience. I am always sure of her. I can count on her as on the polar star. She is slender and frail and gentle, but unwavering and steadfast and loyal. She does not look so very strong, but I have an idea she would fight like a tigress for the thing she loved, if perhaps it were helpless and wounded."

He paused a moment and then repeated it, "Helpless and wounded."

Just what it stirred in her mind he did not know, but in the pause she echoed the words, "Helpless, wounded," as if a premonition, an apprehension had come to her in their sound.

"She comes of a dominant blood," said Mitchell thoughtfully; "but the force, the unyielding strain is in her sinews as well as theirs. A woman of their own flesh, she is of their own power. And yet because she is a woman her power is infinitely augmented—because, again, it is directed at one ambition."

Mitchell looked away down the road a moment, feeling for the first time that he had perhaps been regarding her

too closely for her own ease. Perhaps, too, she would want to question him and would prefer it so. The long road lay white and empty in the moonlight. The coachman and footman were whispering together. The horses shifted lazily from one hip to the other. Cartier sat idle in his silent machine. The soft purring snore of the Princess Helma had ceased. It seemed to Mitchell a long, long time since he had left the Villa della Corona, and with that idea came a nudge to his consciousness that he had best get on with his errand.

"She is clear-sighted enough to know," he said, bringing his eyes back again to her face, "that the important business of life is not accumulating riches, or conferring and receiving titles or filling a perishable head with facts and figures; but lies in loving, in making others happy, in making her womanhood a blessing and an inspiration. That is why, with all the power and force of her nature, she has flung herself into the ambition of being the wife of the man she loves. Nothing can dissuade her from that, because nothing else is half so powerful. The man she loves is worthy of her—there is no word in the world to be raised against him. There is everything in the world to be charged to his credit. She is going to be true and loyal to him against all the forces of the globe, if necessary, and he is going to be proud of her to the death. That is why I love her, Altess. She may be a duchess, and a great lady, but she is something better than that besides. She is a woman with a lovely soul, and a brave, true heart."

He laid his hand again upon hers lightly. "The girl you were," he said half absently. He saw that her teeth had caught her red underlip sharply, and that her eyes were closed—and he looked away again from something it was not his to see.

"The man she loves is wounded and helpless, and he needs her. That is enough. Do you suppose that anything on earth can keep her from him? The same power from without that would hold her back, is within her to

go to him. Do you know, the outside power arrogantly dreams that it can make her the wife of another man? So little do they reckon on their own dominant blood which is in the veins of their women no less than in their men! So little do they count upon her brave, true heart! There is only one man in all the world who can have and hold that heart, and he is sick and helpless and cannot come to tell her how he needs her. There is only one man in all her world—and that, Altess, is why I love her so."

He drew back a little and looked down the empty white road as before. When he spoke again his voice was lighter and clearer. "I must not detain you longer," he said, "and moreover, I must return to my pavilion. I left a sick man there in charge of servants, and I must get back to him. He is the gentleman who owns the villa."

The lips of the woman were trembling. She seemed to answer him merely in the hope that the words would steady her mouth. "Count Biolti is ill at the pavilion?"

"It is not Count Biolti," said Mitchell, the excitement of his final coup thrilling him. "It is an Englishman, who bought the place nine years ago because he loved it. He is called Lord Bannistair, Jock Bannistair."

There was a still, fine silence; then the white, pure fingers he had touched slipped from the edge of the window and the lifeless arm swung down limply against the dark panel. The white, sweet face with the closed eyes tilted slowly forward, and the body swerved.

A short, guttural cry came from inside the carriage, and the fat, strong arms of the Princess Helma gathered the fainting woman to her broad shoulder. Mitchell jumped to the door and opened it.

"In the little black bag under the seat," cried the good princess, whose face was covered with tears and whose eyes were swollen and red. "Give the long bottle of eau de cologne—it is all I have. This is what comes of traveling without maids! There, there

my pretty, are you more comfortable? Poor sweet, poor sweet!"

She leaned back against the cushions still holding the woman in her arms against her comfortable breast. The clean, crisp smell of the cologne-water tinged the air. Mitchell stood anxiously by.

Princess Helma looked at him fiercely over the recumbent golden head. "Out upon you and your eloquence," she snorted, but so practiced was she in the art of snorting that she could shade and grade the tone to many meanings and now managed to make her irritation not unkind. "You have made me cry, and my poor pretty faint away. What shall I do? Is he really so ill? Look at the pair of them, my good sir. I ask you, does it seem they love one another?"

By some instinctive wisdom, Mitchell held his peace.

The golden head stirred a little miserably.

"Oh, Jock, Jock!" moaned the woman suddenly, and her voice sounded like that of a broken-hearted child—and let no one think there is any more moving accent in all the griefs of a grievous world.

Again over the fat, inflamed visage of the tender-hearted Princess Helma the tears streamed down. "Where's that fool Anton?" she sobbed openly. "Tell him to turn this ark around. I am going back to the villa, and Wilhelm can cut me to pieces for all I care!"

X

"It is one thing to appeal to a woman's heart, and quite another to appeal to a man's reason." This amazing seed of wisdom was sown by Mitchell as he mounted to his seat beside Cartier in the motor, but it fell upon desert land, took no root and was winnowed away on the night wind. For woman's heart and man's reason were without interest to him unless the former was set upon a touring-car and the latter open to the conviction

that there was but one motor and Cartier was its prophet.

The car turned about, repassed the coach which was itself preparing to turn, and set out violently toward the crossroads. After his one sage remark Mitchell remained silent, his eyes on the doubly lighted road before them, until as they neared the white gates of the villa road they passed a little house where one window shone lighted.

"Regardez the house," said Mitchell, with a nudge to his companion. "You may have to go there later on an errand. It is the house of the good father. He has no parish and no provision, but he may do a stroke of business tonight that he can live on for years to come."

"Surely Lord Bannistair is not ill?"

"I am not speaking of the extreme unction," replied Mitchell. And then with a laugh hummed the song of Nankipoo:

"I'm going to be wedded instead of be-headed;
It's slower but equally sure!"

They turned in at the pavilion road, and Mitchell suddenly cried, "Stop!"

Cartier made a swift movement and the great red dragon stopped within its own length. "What now?" said Cartier, getting up and looking at the road.

"I am sorry to disappoint you by saying that to the best of my belief we have not added to your probably long list of murders. There is no victim under our bloodthirsty wheels. I have but the innocent intention of dismounting, of knocking at yonder humble cot and ascertaining if Felippo has yet recovered his breath." Mitchell jumped to the road, crossed it, and beat at the door of Felippo's hut. There was no sign of light or life anywhere about the place. He knocked again, with no better success. Then he pushed the door open and stepped in.

Cartier saw the spark of a burning match inside the inclosed blackness, through the open doorway. It disappeared like a firefly in the grass. A moment later Mitchell sprang to his seat again.

"Felippo has ceased to put his faith in the good Lady of Heaven," he said, as Cartier busied himself about starting the car once more. "He has decided to put his trust in a few solid miles of distance. He and his faithful co-worker have departed. The days of their soft snap are over."

"Well," said Cartier indifferently, "you do not need them as witnesses. I fancy you and the fat lady in the coach will do for that."

Mitchell turned on him in amazement. "How do you know she is fat?" he asked.

"The carriage canted to the left in spite of the fact that the heavy fool of a coachman sat to the right."

"I thought you saw nothing!" said Mitchell.

"As you please. The lady to whom you spoke has yellow hair, a straight nose, a sharply defined brow, a very sweet mouth and a rarely beautiful hand. The carriage is the equipage of royalty—probably German, from the livery. The horses are tired, and the footman is a gambler."

Mitchell laughed. "Did you hear every word that I said?"

"I did. You speak German excellently. It is a pity to waste such perfection on such a rotten language. For the rest, what do I care? You might have planned to kidnap the Kaiser, and unless my car was to be the means to the end it would make no mustard-seed of difference to me."

"I believe you, upon my soul!"

As they came to a halt before the pavilion, one side of which was now cheerfully lighted, Mitchell got out. "I seem to do nothing but spring to and from this perch," he said. Somehow he felt light-hearted and boyish and garrulous. "I'm going to send Gilbert out with my kit-bags. Will you show him where to put them so that they won't interfere with the works? I suppose we should be starting in a couple of hours. None of us has had any dinner yet, however, and I refuse to go without it."

As a matter of fact, Gilbert and Sumi had no intention that anyone in

their care, or out of it within a certain radius, should be reduced to any such melancholy privation. Mitchell found them arranging in a room overlooking the moonlit garden a most attractive table set for two. Indeed, so daintily was it set forth that it by no means deserved the frown with which he stood regarding it. Gilbert looked at his master anxiously. Sumi placidly stood at ease, expressing in every line his knowledge that the table was perfect, but also his superior willingness to alter and deface it in order that it might meet the eccentric demands of a person in authority.

"Is it in any way unsatisfactory, sir?"

"Only in the way of needing two more covers," said Mitchell.

Gilbert's face cleared. "Guests, Mr. Mitchell?"

Mitchell bent a severe eye on him. He was whimsically disposed that everyone should have as good a time as he. "Royalty!" he said impressively. "A princess and a grand duchess!"

Gilbert's face became impassioned with the true Britisher's love of the heavier titles, and as suddenly became lugubriously downcast. "And no sweet! And no flowers!"

Sumi himself awoke to animation. "Marrons—crème fouettée—cognac! Good!"

"And where are we ha-going to get marrons, man alive?"

"Brought box—lord find good!" Sumi had a smile like an angel.

"It is my impression," said Mitchell, amiably filching an olive from the table like any schoolgirl, "that if we needed a copy of the great seal, or a coil of two-inch rope, or a pair of crutches or a volume of the encyclopedia, Sumi could produce our wants from some box drawn from some mysterious recess of that automobile. You don't happen to have three dozen Killarney roses about you anywhere, do you?"

Sumi smiled and shook his head. With a certain droll perception of the dramatic quality of his action he went

to the door of the pavilion and called, "Cartier!"

A muffled roar replied.

"Two miles—south road—empty villa—steal flowers!" His great voice thundered forth this order quite simply, and his sturdy squat figure stood motionless in the doorway until the chug-chug-chug of the motor announced its acquiescence to his wishes.

"The Braccioni do coldly furnish forth the marriage tables!" murmured Mitchell appreciatively, as the smiling little brown man came back to beat cream for the chestnuts. "How is my Lord Bannistair?"

"Sick man—lie down," said Sumi, the smile vanishing. "Better soon—Sumi hopes."

"Mitchell hopes so, too—and thinks so, too, what's more! When the ladies come—they should be here now at any moment—keep them in there and keep them very quiet. I'm going above."

When he knocked softly at the door of the room upstairs to the choice of which he had advised his host, it came upon him with a renewed force that he had set himself no easy task in his interference with these several long-ordered lives. He found himself swallowing down a juvenile choke of panic, as he entered the room in response to the rather feeble summons.

The Lord Bannistair was lying on a couch, almost as entirely abandoned to the support of his pillows as any woman. His face showed whiter than its previous utter whiteness, and the story of bitter suffering was written even more clearly than before upon this human page. His hands were holding the magazine cutting of her picture, and the paper fairly fluttered in his unsteady hold.

Mitchell stood over him a moment in silence. "I suppose you've had some brandy?" he said at last.

"I'm sure I don't remember," replied the other, with a brief, brave attempt at a smile.

"Well, that's much too long to wait between drinks," said Mitchell, turning around on his heel and snapping his

fingers in a way he had when looking about for something. "You have a flask up here?"

"In that case on the dresser," said Bannistair docilely. "How exemplary a patient does a man become when the doctor prescribes brandy!"

Mitchell lifted the flask from its socket in the case, and found a small glass standing near. "I'm going to give you such a dose," he threatened, glancing up for a moment as he poured the liquor. "Half of it you need anyway, and the other half you need anent the talk I am going to have with you."

It was even while he helped to hold the glass to Bannistair's mouth that he heard the carriage driving to the door. "And there's little enough time for the having of it, too."

"You aren't going to drive to the coast, after all?"

"I am going with Cartier."

"Then what's the hurry? What carriage is that?"

"All this information shall be added unto you," said Mitchell, setting down the empty glass. He drew a chair near the couch, and then, instead of sitting in it, leaned on the back, with his hands clasped before him. The chair tilted slowly to and fro.

"I should like to say one thing," said Bannistair, his fingers folding and unfolding the paper picture as he spoke. "I can't imagine exactly what you do think of my performance on the terrace while we were at tea. But I beg that you will not write me down a lunatic. This long fever I have had burning in me has left me, I am forced to believe, even more light-headed than I thought. Perhaps you can imagine what kind of a humiliation it is for a fellow who has been generally credited with the ability to get along without a nursemaid and a rolling chair to find himself having the vapors—whatever they may be—and toppling over in a dead faint like a silly widow."

"I can imagine. But you will get over that kind of thing. Happiness and the Villa della Corona are going to accomplish that."

"Happiness," said Bannistair, and coughed a little laugh of misery.

"I said happiness," reiterated Mitchell pleasantly.

"I know you did. One speaks in words. Happiness is a word."

"One also writes in words," said Mitchell, to humor him. He leaned over suddenly and at the risk of infuriating Bannistair took the page deftly from his hand. Whipping a pencil from his pocket, he drew a hasty line through that part of the footnote relating to the marriage of Catarin with one of the Hapsburgs, and wrote swiftly in place of it, "at the Villa della Corona, to John, Lord Bannistair."

It was done before the sick man, who had angrily risen on his elbow, could so much as utter one word of protest. Mitchell gave it back to him immediately. "After all, the picture isn't yours, you know," he said, as ever pleasantly. "It is mine and I am going to keep it, always."

A brightness had come into Bannistair's eyes and a flush in his face. "You are unpardonably insolent!" he said furiously, sitting up.

"I am a prophet without honor," returned Mitchell quietly. "Don't get stuffy again. Remember how badly you treated me when we first met and how sorry you were afterward. Will you lie down again? I may have to give you more brandy. For, fury or no fury, I am going to talk my talk with you. I have no intention of being insolent, upon my word. I am merely the outsider who sees the most of the game. Please reserve your judgment, and give me a chance to clear myself."

Bannistair sat forward on the couch, staring into the picture which he was holding in both hands. Mitchell noted with satisfaction that the page was steadier than before. The strengthening impulse of the brandy might be evanescent, but before it had completely passed, he would replace it with that irresistible force which not only makes the world go round, but is unfortunately inclined to make men's

heads do likewise until they become able to endure the exhilaration of its power.

"You may go on," said Bannistair in a constrained, unnatural voice.

"I have said once before today," said Mitchell, resting as before on the back of the chair, though without moving it, "that it is one thing to appeal to a woman's heart and quite another to appeal to a man's reason. The remark is not wholly original, I dare say, but it defines my difficulty."

He paused a moment, and then took courage in a glance at the picture of the woman Catarin and in an introspective look at the vision of the girl Catarin, and went on.

"There is a woman in the world who is very unhappy. There are many such, but we are concerned just now with one. I am speaking of the poor little Grand Duchess of Göttenburg-Blenhau."

Bannistair moved sharply and looked up.

"Yes, I know her," said Mitchell, in answer to the look. "I know her very well. You may believe me when I say she is unhappy—she told me so herself."

"Yet," said Bannistair coldly, "she is going to be married this month in Rome—a very brilliant marriage."

Mitchell almost smiled at him. "I hope you haven't been such a bally ass as to imagine it was a matter of her choice. A man of your intelligence, Bannistair—great heavens, is it possible that a touch of jealousy makes the whole world kin? Are you just as unreasonable as Colin Oaf?"

He straightened up and put his hands in his pockets. "Ten years is a long time," he said, and Bannistair was constrained to glance his surprise again. "It was ten years ago that you parted here. Oh, I'm not going into that. But if you let me speak at all, you must let me be frank. A girl of eighteen is more easily impressed by her governors than a woman of twenty-eight. Bannistair, has it ever occurred to you that during your three thousand, six hundred and fifty days

of misery, she has possibly known regret three million, six hundred and fifty thousand times?"

"We will not go into that!"

"Why not? What right have you to make a woman unhappy?"

"I?" Bannistair laughed his short laugh again. "Don't talk nonsense, Mitchell."

"Yes, you," retorted the other sharply. "What have you done to make her happy?"

"I was denied the right," said Bannistair wearily. "What are you talking about? She is a grand duchess. She is going to marry an heir to a kingdom."

"Don't tell me you're narrow-minded enough to believe it's anybody's duty to be a king or queen and set themselves on the neck of hard-working folk! The sooner these long-handled patricians refuse to weigh down their brothers and sisters the better for the world. It's coming, too, Bannistair. The wrong must go to the wall. And any system that gives its women into the arms of men they do not love is grounded in falsity, and you know it is. And if you are going to stand by and see the woman you love given into dishonorable wedlock with another man——"

Bannistair was on his feet. "For God's sake, man, be silent! Don't you know that I have nearly gone mad since this torturing thing met my eyes when I entered this room? It was the first I knew of it. Do you suppose I haven't crowded into these hours more unbearable agony than all that I have endured these ten years? To be without her—that was hell enough! But to know someone else——" He ground one fist into another with a kind of cry and turned away from Mitchell's eyes.

Mitchell took a deep breath. "I am not imagining for one moment, Bannistair, that it is for me, or possible for me, to argue a quarter of an hour and undermine the resolution that has kept you away these ten years. But the case is altered now, is it not? You're not going to stand by, and order me to stand by, and see

these men sell this woman into that hideous bondage? Two white men with red blood in our veins? For you must count me in. I'm here to help. The woman is on the rack of horror—yet what chance has she without someone to fight for her?" He had become suddenly impassioned.

"Why didn't she come to you? You never asked her to!" thundered Mitchell. "Your choice is in your own hands, but as for me, I am a Yankee, and no respecter of kings. And I am a man, and there's a woman in the distress that can come only to a woman. She needs you, Bannistair. For God's sake, have I got to plead her cause to you!"

Bannistair had turned and was looking at him half bewildered.

At the moment the door opened, and the little brown man Sumi put his head into their room. Then quietly he held the door wide.

"Dinner spoils," he said sweetly.

With a groan of despair at the inopportune interruption, Mitchell caught Bannistair by the arm and went down the stairs, very much as a blacksmith would carry a red-hot iron to the anvil before it cooled. He flung open the door of the library and with one hand pulled the Princess Helma out as he impelled Bannistair to enter. Then he closed the door, put both arms around the capacious figure of his companion and kissed her enthusiastically on both cheeks.

"The first time in my life I ever kissed a princess!" said Mitchell buoyantly, as he released the astonished, but it must be said passive, lady. "I do not know that it is customary for the witnesses of a wedding to embrace both before and after, but I have a shrewd suspicion it is going to be done in this case. Sumi—confound you—go tell Cartier to buzz like the wintry blast down to padre's and bring him here at once."

The Princess Helma's fat hand flew to the place where she confidently believed her heart was situated. "Wedding!" she faintly gasped. "Oh, you Americans!"

"We do have a *penchant* for that sort of thing, now, don't we?"

"But so suddenly."

"Good heavens—ten years!" He stopped and regarded her gravely. "It's all very well for them, and we will say it is all very well for me. But what about you?"

"What, indeed?" she echoed, dropping into a chair. "Please forgive my inability to suggest anything. It is so long since I have been kissed!"

"You delicious person!" he laughed, the while he still bent a considering eye upon her. "Really, now, they will—do you think—cut you up as you suggested before, 'particularly small'?"

She was very good-natured about it. "As for that, I am inclined to believe they would despair achieving the end. I owe my preservation to my fondness for almond puffs! Still—" she made an eloquent gesture of uneasiness—"Wilhelm, you know!"

"What will they do to you?" He looked at her curiously. "If you are really afraid, I'll bind you and gag you and carry you off on the yacht just to prove that you had nothing to do with it!"

The one word was sufficient. "Afraid?" The Princess Helma snorted famously. "Why, I spanked Wilhelm when he was a little boy."

At this Mitchell fairly roared with delight. "How can I go away and leave you! Fancy having kissed the woman who spanked Wilhelm!"

"Dinner spoils!" said Sumi, a degree less sweetly than before.

Mitchell nodded toward the closed door. "It is your own master, Sumi. I know that you can carry him around like a sack of corn, and I don't know why you should be any more afraid of him than the princess is of Wilhelm."

Sumi opened the door at this wide enough to admit his square, brown head. "Dinner spoils," he reiterated still more vexedly.

Having shifted the burden of the interruption, Mitchell went to the door himself. "I am very hungry," said he plaintively. But both his mood and his voice left him as he looked in-

side. Catarin and Bannistair were standing a few paces apart, their faces as radiant as the faces of the vision in the garden, their hands at arm's length just clasping. It was in some strange way made known to Mitchell that they had not spoken one word since they were brought together. A ten years' silence is a thing not lightly to be broken. He hesitated a moment and then went in. "We have robbed the Braccioni, iced the wine, sent for the padre, and cooked the goose. We are piping for you with all our hearts—will ye not dance?"

They loosed each other's hands and turned to him. He gave a hand to each. "Good fellow," said he with one grip, "most gracious lady," with another, "God bless you both."

The gracious lady turned her eyes to him. "I wonder," she said slowly, "why you cared so much?"

To his intense distress a dull red flush burned up into his face. "*Warum?*" he echoed as lightly as he could. "Who knows—who ever knows?"

XI

LEAVING them later at the table, on the excuse of some traveling arrangements overlooked, Mitchell slipped out into the night. The lavish radiance of the moon made the dark garden as clear as day. He went slowly to the broken balustrade and leaned on it and looked down.

There were but a few minutes left—a few mouthfuls of the red and yellow pomegranate that had fallen to him, the one fruit from his tree of life. He tasted them lingeringly.

In a little while it would be over. He would again intrust his physical being to Cartier's driving, he would be whirled along the long, dusty road that leads away from the garden of dear things. A cheerless vista stretched before him, the long, monotonous grind of life in the business world, the forced material excitement of gain and loss, the unsatisfying existence of the homeless man, the wearisome presence

of people for whom his heart gave not one throb.

In the magic light the dry basin of the fountain, the marble seat, the broad steps of the terrace opposite shone as white as pearl against the dark masses of tangled growth. Opposite, the exquisite face of the villa beamed like some enchanted palace.

He was going away. It was all over. He should never sit there again waiting to be started into delicious anticipation of her coming, by the murmuring sound of water in the fountain. He had found her a spirit, he left her a living, happy woman. It was something to think of, that, something for an outsider to remember.

He heard his name called far behind him, and gathered himself for his departure. "It will never be any easier than it is now," he said to himself dully, and turned away.

Out in the road the lamps of the carriage of the Princess Helma burned beside the fiery beacons of the car. They were to go in different directions at the crossroads—she to face the wrath of the makers of history, he to face the dawn at sea alone.

They were all on the steps to see him off. Bannistair wrung his hand. "It's not really good-bye, by any means," he said. He had already trebled his strength in the warmth of happiness—something for an outsider to remember. "We will all meet here again soon, don't you know."

The Princess Helma was weeping, and waiting to be taken to her coach.

Mitchell turned slowly to Catarin. "*Auf Wiedersehen*," she softly said, and held out both her hands. He took them in his own.

At the foot of the steps Sumi and Gilbert were shaking hands. Mitchell thought afterward that it was strange he should have heard them speaking.

"Think better—Yellow Peril?" asked Sumi, with his little laugh.

"I halways said as a people as drinks tea 'as in them the makings of

a great nation," replied Gilbert, vindicated to the last.

Mitchell kissed the hands of the gracious lady gently. "*Auf Wiedersehen, nicht wahr?*" she repeated half nervously, for if he was in tune with the Duchess Catarin she also was in tune with him.

He looked into her face gravely. "Who knows?" he said; "who ever knows?"

It seemed to him that he was still standing before her looking into her pale, sweet face—as if all through the years to come he should do naught but that. But he found himself in the road handing the Princess Helma into her carriage, and bidding her not to cry. She said something, he never knew what. Puck closed the door and soared into his place upon the box. The coachman uttered a guttural German sound and the coach rolled slowly forward, gathered speed gradually and disappeared in the shadows.

Gilbert was standing beside him, then, and touched him on the arm. He turned and suffered himself to be piloted to the tonneau of the already trembling car.

"Who knows—who ever knows?" he found himself repeating in his mind over and over.

Ahead of him stretched the long dusty road that leads away from the garden of dear things.

"Ready?" said Cartier.

"Ready," said Gilbert.

As the car entered upon the journey down the long dusty road, Mitchell turned back to look at the garden of dear things.

In the light from the open doorway stood the two who had come into his life that day as strands are given into the hands of the weaver. As he looked, they turned to each other. Jock Bannistair put his arm about the white-clad figure and drew her closer. The picture that they made, standing so, he drawing her toward the door, impatiently, imperious, she yielding with a half-reluctant tenderness, was something for an outsider to remember all his life.

VIA CRUCIS

The vision of dawn is leisure,
But the truth of day is toil.

THE sun comes up like a great, red rose,
The perfume over the wide world blows,
And, oh, to walk in the pathways fair
With the rose-trimmed beds and scented air,
And far at the garden's end a nook
With You and a poet's dream-set book!

The sun goes down like a great red fire,
And dies in ashes of vain desire,
For my pathway lay outside the wall
That girdled You and the roses tall,
And my footprints show a deeper red
And a crown of thorn is on my head!

Yet the vision stays with me all day,
Sweet solace along the rough highway,
Till the nails of Toil and spear of Want,
Grief's bitter cup and the jeer and taunt
Are touched by Sleep, and You softly glide
Where I, with the dream, am crucified!

CLARENCE URMY.



IN THE RAILWAY STATION

"HERE!" shouted the depot official, "what do you mean by throwing those trunks around like that?"

The baggageman gasped in astonishment, and several travelers pinched themselves to make sure that it was real. Then the official spoke again to the baggageman.

"Don't you see that you're making big dents in this concrete platform?"



DYER—Has he an interest in the business?

RYER—No, only a mild curiosity.

IN VINO VERITAS

By Gertrude Lynch

THE golden globules slipping like sunlight from bit to bit of ice in the long glass seemed very tempting. Never had his throat been so parched. He remembered all at once that his day's work had been particularly strenuous and that he had omitted his noonday meal.

"Say when," announced Hanson, waiting with firm grip on the neck of the decanter.

Wainwright made a gesture in which hesitation played the leading rôle.

"You know I'm on the water-wagon, old chap."

"The water-wagon be hanged. Say——"

The hesitation became more pronounced.

"Three months today—three solid months."

"Good time to fall off—on an anniversary; makes it doubly dear. Say——"

"Well, all right. I didn't need to, but I think it's a good idea for a fellow to break off once in a while, just to show that he is master of the situation. No habit is going to control my vote."

He reached a hand for the liquid and drank as if he had crossed a desert and reached the first spring.

As he drained the last drop, he slapped his friend on the back.

"Wouldn't take a thousand dollars for that thirst, not a thousand dollars."

"Have another?"

"I'll keep you company if you insist."

He swallowed the second less hurriedly, sitting on the arm of the Morris-chair and watching Hanson arrange his tie before the shaving-mirror.

Wainwright accompanied the last drop, to obtain which he had almost to dislocate his neck, with the ejaculation:

"Well, you look some. What's doin', mate?"

Hanson shoved his head to one side and his tie in the opposite direction with the peculiar motion by which masculinity gives the finishing touch to its adornment, and then clinked his glass against Wainwright's with a boyish gesture.

"I'm going to the Cawns' 'at home.' A cousin of mine from the country, Marian Latimer, is visiting there. I thought you were going. Paula Cawn told me you were."

"Believe I am." Wainwright put down his glass and for half an hour a steady stream of eloquence floated in from the inner room while he made ready for the social sacrifice.

As they emerged from the apartment house, advertised for "bachelors exclusively," many an admiring eye followed them, either furtively or without stealth, according to sex, for it might be possible to take a Sabbath day's journey without discovering two finer types of young American manhood, whether in the matter of physique, grooming or that indefinable air which marks the young man who has a firm grip on the lever of success.

The unaccustomed stimulant had brought the color to Wainwright's face, a light to his eyes, and, naturally reserved, he talked now a mixture of chaff and humorous observation on passers-by. Hanson looked at him admiringly. "By Jove," he said at

length, "it's worth while climbing on the wagon to get a fall like yours."

Wainwright made a detour in the direction of their club.

"Let's brace up for the occasion! I feel a presentiment that we are to be offered feminine punch, and I give you my word the taste of the last I patronized comes back whenever I feel especially depressed."

Having left the club, they crossed the street and turned in the direction of the Crown residence, where a red carpet and striped awning, a policeman and gaping crowd announced their destination.

When Wainwright left his room, there was a peculiar lightness in his head and his feet seemed to support a body to which the attraction of gravitation had less meaning than ordinary. The few business worries which he had brought uptown with him suddenly seemed too trivial to remain longer in a mind tuned to the *motif* of optimism. He looked at Hanson a number of times, thinking what a fine fellow he was and how fortunate for him that chance had thrown them together. He put an arm about his shoulder once, in the exuberance of his joy, and said feelingly:

"I tell you, old chap, it's worth living to have a friend like you."

He recalled a funny story that he had tried to remember for two or three days, and so overcome was he by its repetition that he stopped and leaned against a rampant lion carved on a gateway to laugh. He resented the stolidity of Hanson's demeanor and remonstrated with him on his lack of humor, which he contended was growing so marked that it was gradually unfitting him for the society of good fellows. He thought he detected annoyance on his listener's face and hastened to assure him that if everybody in the world deserted him he would remain faithful.

He brushed up against a man while he was making his statement of fidelity and, when the man glared darkly, stopped and apologized with an unnecessary profusion of detail.

Through all the adventurous way he was conscious of a certain exhilaration in the mere act of living that he had not noted earlier in the day, and the gnawing hunger which had reminded him an hour before that he had not lunched had now disappeared.

He resented Hanson's abstinence at the club and muttered thickly regarding his affectation of a virtue he did not possess. When Hanson laughed he fought with a desire to strike him and the next moment an overwhelming sense of his friend's superiority overcame him. Suppose he should lose him forever; it would be like falling into the depths of a horrible crater. He realized that he must be subtle and not let him know how necessary he was, and, in strict accordance with this resolve, when Hanson stumbled on the lower step, he caught him by the arm and said in agonized accents:

"You didn't hurt you, Hanny, sure? You'd tell me if you did?"

When Hanson answered amiably that he was all right, he breathed easier and took off his hat to wipe his brow, wet with cold drops of perspiration which the fear had caused.

He went into the coat-room and deposited his hat and stick very delicately on a chair, then lifted them to the mantelpiece, and having estimated the probability of safety in those two places removed them again and put them on the floor under another chair, chuckling at his wisdom. First he thought he would tell Hanson of the good hiding-place he had found, and then concluded not to. The mood of the moment before was replaced by one of suspicion.

After all, who was Hanson? If he should tell all he knew about him how many friends would he have?—not one. Of course, he was not going to tell, but Hanson must look out and not try his patience too far. He would warn him of that fact. Where was he?

The knowledge that he had been basely deserted beat into his brain. He followed the crowd in the direction where he thought he caught a glimpse of a familiar hair-cut, and then the heat

of the rooms, the sickening mélange of perfumes, the noise of the Hungarian orchestra and of shrill-toned talk overcame him. Everything was in an enveloping mist and articles of furniture swam toward him as if he were participating in some spiritualistic séance. The one thought that dominated him was that he must take care of his feet and put them down cautiously, must not speak but a word or two so that something—he could not remember what it was about him that made him unlike other men and unfit for their society—should not be discovered.

He was jostled here and there and felt a certain safety in the contact of human beings; it was the free space and the concentration of many eyes to which he objected. He grasped a hand that came toward him and by a supreme effort prevented himself from going after it when it was withdrawn.

Many faces that seemed strangely familiar rose before him. He smiled at them all by turns and spoke. He did not know what he said, but was relieved when they responded with words that did not reach his line of consciousness. Of one fact alone he seemed cognizant, that the terrible secret he bore was still his own. No one apparently suspected it. If he could only get away into some quiet corner and think it all out.

He found a quiet corner, but forgot what it was he wanted to think about, and started into the crowd again.

A fair head overtopping some pink chiffon was near and seemed to be coming his way. Again the clouds that enwrapped him lifted a little. She was someone he knew—knew very well; why, of course, it was his wife.

His wife? No, indeed, he was not married, but she would have been if he had asked her. He fought the objection that obsessed him for a moment. Of course, any man could marry any woman if he only asked her. Hanson had said so once. Well, who was Hanson to talk that way? How did he know? Then a frightful dread pervaded his being. Supposing Hanson should ask the pink girl before he did!

He braced himself. It was a crisis in his life that he was facing, and, in some unexplainable way, the pink girl was involved in it. What was her name? He went over the list hurriedly while he placed a detaining hand on her sleeve and looked at her with beseeching eyes and lips that in spite of an intense effort would tremble.

Claudia, Beatrice, Mary, Edith, no, that wasn't the way to spell Edith now. He could not recall the latest method, but why should he bother as it was not the name of the pink girl, anyway. It would be restful if he could think.

Paula, that was the name. He succeeded in saying it after two attempts, which a crash of the czardas successfully hid.

The door of a small, inner apartment was open. It was delightfully gloomy and, leading her by the hand he had grasped, they entered.

They sank on a three-cornered seat covered with tinsel draperies over which Malay creeses formed arabesques of steel. How strange that he, an Indian prince, should have captured her after all the fighting for her favor! He forgot his claim to imaginative royalty and only remembered that Hanson was in the other room and wanted to get Paula from him. He must lose no time.

"You will marry me? Tell me you will! I have loved you since the first day. Don't keep me in suspense." He stumbled a little over the last word, but to his listener it seemed only as if he were shaken by the power of some sudden, mighty feeling; the darkness of the room, her own excitement, the babble of voices had prevented her realizing that there was anything more unusual in his attitude than would naturally be shown by a man overwhelmingly in love.

"I didn't——"

The contradiction sent a flood of blood to his brain anew. How dared anyone contradict him! But she was a woman; he must be patient.

"Oh, you must have, you must have——"

Hanson was already standing in the doorway. If she didn't promise he felt that all was over and destruction imminent.

"Say you will. Quick! Quick!"

Her back was to the entrance and she did not see the reason for his emphasis. She was a little irritated at his exaction. Of course, she was going to accept him, but why need he hurry her? Yet, in the presence of such tremendous feeling, she felt that even the most maidenly scruples might waive their claim. She whispered "yes" and was about to hide her head on his shoulder when a voice behind stiffened her into a conventional pose.

"Been looking for you everywhere, old chap. Don't you think it's about time we said day-day?"

They rose to their feet stumbingly, and Paula hid her confusion by an attempt at airy persiflage.

The shaft of light from the door struck Wainwright's glassy eyes, and Hanson, all at once cognizant of his condition, thought he read in the girl's evident embarrassment her knowledge of the situation. He realized the usual masculine obstinacy under such spirituous circumstances, and while he hesitated as to the best method of getting Wainwright out of the place without making a scene, a chattering crowd invaded the room and Paula fled through the hall and up the stairs, having in the confusion, unseen by anyone, pressed Wainwright's hand and whispered, "Tomorrow at four," hoping that no one had noticed the expression on his face which seemed to invite the world to note their secret.

Wainwright proved more amiable than Hanson had expected. A cool current of air met them as they emerged from the "den" and he followed it, as if it were a beckoning finger, to the front door. He ignored Hanson's suggestion that they get their hats and sticks, walked down the illimitable stretch of red carpet and fell into the cab which was nearest the curb.

He didn't see why it was necessary for cabbies to be so impertinent and

always want to know where you were going just because you happened to sit in their cabs. He thought he would tell the driver what he thought of this particular stupidity, but what was the use? It was beneath his dignity to get into any argument with such people. After all, they worked hard. If the cabby wanted to know he was going home, why, he'd tell him. He did tell him, coolly, disdainfully, absolutely refusing to get angry even when the man repeated it after him with insulting emphasis. *Home!*

Why was it that Hanson was always coming where he wasn't wanted? He could have put his feet up and had a nice sleep! He wouldn't let him know how inopportune he considered his appearance—pushing Paula out and getting in himself. No gentleman would push a lady out of a cab.

How soft the cab was! No, it was his bed and why did it rise up and go down that way? When the next wave came, he'd swim ashore—

The Crawns had an impromptu dinner-party succeeding the "at home," then a "first night" engaged the attention of the reception committee, escorts and chaperons. It was consequently late before Paula and Marian had their usual kimono talk.

"I thought Mr. Wainwright was going to stay to dinner," commenced Marian, while she dabbed some cold cream over one eye and peered closely in the glass at a small black speck which she finally brushed off with a sigh of relief.

"I'd have hated him," said Paula confidentially, "if he had. I couldn't have entertained those tiresome people if he had stayed under-the-circumstances."

The last syllables she enunciated as if she were practicing for an elocution lesson, and looking in the opposite direction was plainly conscious of Marian's perplexity.

"Under what circumstances?" Marian turned, the cold cream poised in air and her nose shining lustrously.

"Marian," Paula made an impres-

sive pause. "Don't believe what people say about men not having any feeling in these days; that they are too blasé for the genuine sentiments of life. I know differently."

Marian was too astonished to do more than advance with a dramatic stride to the edge of the bed where Paula was sitting, her knees encircled by her arms.

"Why?" As the full knowledge of the meaning of Paula's silence thrilled her, she said:

"You don't mean that Mr. Wain—?"

"I do."

Having enjoyed the full effects of the terse confession and there being no reason for further prolonging the facts of the case, Paula revealed in rapid ejaculations the secret which she had been obliged to bottle up so many hours.

"Of course I've always known he admired me. We've danced together heaps, and at the Smiths' house-party he was my shadow. I've always managed to keep him where I wanted him, but he got the best of me this afternoon. Naturally I didn't expect he was going to propose to me at a 'tea'—just think of it! He absolutely took me off my feet. You'd have thought to see and hear me I had never had a proposal before."

"You didn't say 'yes' right off?"

Paula evaded a direct response. "Even papa admires Mr. Wainwright, and his family is irreproachable. Of course, that wouldn't make any difference if I didn't love him, but I've been crazy over him, simply crazy for months. There was a time when I thought Jess Alleyne had him, but you know her way: if a man hands her a cup of tea she'll find a proposal from him in the tea-leaves. There was nothing in it. There have been moments when I thought her method was the right one; she seemed to have so much attention; but, believe me, the old-fashioned one of waiting for the man is the best, after all. You don't lose anything by being modest."

"Tell me what he said."

"Marian, I couldn't—not so you would understand. It was like a great storm, a tidal wave that swept us both out to sea. I am sure he didn't intend to propose, but as soon as he saw me he appeared to forget the world, society, conventions—everything. He took me by the wrist—see, I've actually got a blue mark where he hurt me—and drew me, no, dragged me into the 'den.' I didn't intend to yield at once. I have always been told that what a man gets too easily he doesn't value. What do people know? I am sure, feeling so intensely as he does, if I had hesitated he would have gone out of his mind. If I had not intended to say 'yes,' if I had not cared for him before, he was so compelling I should have been forced to yield."

"Did he k—?"

"There was just a second when I was afraid; think of the situation, people passing the door every minute; any one of them liable to come in! But he displayed the most marvelous self-control. When Mr. Hanson interrupted you could actually see the effort; it was like a physical convulsion. I don't know what I said. I was so agitated that I ran upstairs and sat here alone for a moment to recover."

There was a warning tap at the door, a maternal "Girls," and an obedient silence.

A half-hour later from the inner room came:

"Paula! Are you asleep?"

"Asleep? I should say not. I don't expect to close my eyes, and I'm sure I shall look like a fright tomorrow—I mean today."

"Does he come tomorrow—I mean today?"

"This afternoon at four. I will ask mama to take you for a drive in the Park, and keep her there just as long as you can."

Another half-hour.

"Paula?"

"What, dear?"

"Church or house?"

There was a sound of someone rising in the bed.

"If that isn't the strangest thing!

Do you know, I believe I could be a medium. I certainly can establish telepathic communication when I am highly excited. If you'll believe it, Marian, I was thinking at the moment you spoke of just that very thing. Which would you?"

"You get more presents if you have a church wedding."

"Yes, but some men hate the publicity of it."

"But if Mr. Wainwright's so in love with you I should not think he could refuse."

"I don't suppose he will. I feel that I could make him do anything, and just for that reason I want to use my power wisely. I don't want to make his devotion ridiculous."

"I know just how you feel; that kind always ends in the divorce court."

There was a stifled scream.

"Marian dear, how can you? One looks at life so differently after an experience like mine. I don't believe that I shall ever joke again about those awful things."

"What awful things?"

"Those you spoke of."

"Divorces?" sleepily.

"Yes."

There was only the sound of deep breathing in answer to this, and, notwithstanding her asseverations, Paula slept soundly until a tap at the door announced the morning chocolate.

At about the time of its arrival, Wainwright in blue pajamas, with a safety razor in his hand, sauntered into his friend's room and tried the edge of the razor on the edge of the pajama sleeves, while he met Hanson's eye with rather a sheepish expression.

Hanson pretended to be ignorant of his thought, but yawned and made some banal utterance about the difficulty of rising.

Wainwright took the bull by the horns.

"Say, old chap, did I make fifteen different kinds of a fool of myself? Am I a social outcast? Must you tell me, gently but firmly, that hereafter our trails fork?"

"Glad you're on!" Hanson was apparently not in the mood to make light of the situation. "It will make it easier for me to break it to you."

"Come, now, don't rub it in. Dinner at Del's if you tell me the whole truth without any tract talk."

"How far back can you go?"

"I remember going into the club and trying to make you take another high-ball; everything is perfectly clear to that point. Then I remember indistinctly a red carpet, a lot of people, one fat old lady in black satin and a girl I seemed to be talking to in a dark room. I haven't a ghost of an idea who she was or what we were talking about."

"The girl was Paula Crawn," said Hanson.

"You don't say! Paula Crawn. She's a fine girl! Was I with her long?"

"I don't think so, for you had shaken hands with me about three minutes before; told me how surprised you were to see me there; that you had heard I was doing great work at the seat of war, wherever that may be. You seemed to like the expression, however, for you repeated it six times."

"I don't care what I said to you. What did I say to other people?"

"Thank heaven, I don't know." Then, realizing that he had gone far enough on that tack, Hanson encouraged him a little. "There was one thing in your favor: the orchestra and the gabbling people made it simply impossible to know what anyone said or what you said yourself. You'd get along just as well at those confounded crushes if you just moved your lips and didn't say a word."

Wainwright was singularly dense to generalities.

"Do you think Paula Crawn knew?"

"I think she did. She certainly looked the picture of embarrassment when I came in, and she took the first opportunity to get away. I couldn't say for certain, though. Perhaps you'd only made love to her."

"Nonsense! I hope I'm a gentleman, even when I fall off the wagon. If you were in my shoes, would you

apologize, send a nice box of flowers with a note?"

"Well, I wouldn't go on all fours, until I was sure."

"That's so! it would be awkward. I suppose it would be wiser to wait; but I hate uncertainty."

"There are worse things than uncertainty," said Hanson sententiously. "I can imagine situations in life where one might wish that state of mind to be indefinitely prolonged, if one had only the alternative of certainty to relieve it."

Paula, with an air of satisfaction, watched the victoria drive off. She waved meaningly to Marian from the window and then said to the butler:

"James, tell Mr. Wainwright to come right up to the library." She had selected that room as being less liable to interruption, its location at the end of a circuitous passage giving its occupants time to change their position before being discovered, if such necessity should arise.

Paula thought at first that she would lie down on the many-cushioned couch under the mullioned window, through which the sun of late afternoon filtered delicately, and pretend that she had just fallen asleep, with a rose dangling from her fingers on the black fur rug.

She pictured his start of surprise, the hasty crossing of the room, the kneeling at her side and the waking her with a caress like that which brought back to consciousness the sleeping princess. She arranged herself accordingly, but after ten minutes her limbs became stiff and her nervousness made a continuance in that position impossible.

She changed to the easy-chair and fell into a graceful pose of watchfulness, her fingers between the leaves of a copy of "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and a look of shyness and wonder on her face. She and Marian had practiced that with other expressions.

She pitied Wainwright more than she did herself when the clocks marked the quarter past the hour. "I hope he doesn't kill a cabman or get into a quarrel with the stupid people who always

stop one when one is in a hurry," she thought. "Poor dear! I can see him fuming."

Half-past four came, five; half-past five, six; and as the minute hand marked the thirty past, she heard the wheels of the victoria returning. She leaned over the rail and called in an agitated voice:

"James, tell Miss Latimer to come to my room at once, and don't let mama hear, if you can help it."

When Marian entered Paula locked the door and stood with her back against it as if fearful of an intrusion before she could relieve her mind.

"Marian, the most terrible thing has happened. I am wild with anxiety."

If Paula had not been so agitated she would have noticed that her ejaculations did not meet with the response that might have been expected.

"He did not come. Not a word, not a message—boy, telegraph or telephone. Something awful has occurred. Nothing but a matter of life or death could have kept him. How shall I find out? What do people do in such cases? Do they send to the hospitals? I'm afraid to tell mama. I know she'd say that until a man has asked a girl's father she is not formally engaged, and until she is formally engaged she has no right to look for him in hospitals."

Marian broke in.

"I wasn't going to tell you, Paula, but I can't see you suffer this way."

Paula grasped her arm. "What is it? You have seen him? You saw him run over? Was it an automobile?"

Marian took off her hat deliberately and stuck her hat-pins viciously in its side.

"Just a few moments ago we got blockaded near Delmonico's. I heard my name and looked around; there were Mr. Hanson and Mr. Wainwright. They were going in there to dinner, so they said, and we had quite a chat while we waited for the street to clear."

"Did he act queerly or anything?"

"Paula, I can't understand it any more than you do. He looked fine, and asked particularly after you; said

he thought the reception was charming, and hoped you were not fatigued."

"That was all?"

"Absolutely all."

"You'll tell mama I can't come down on account of my head?"

"You poor dear, you, I'll come right up and sit with you. What brutes men are! If they'd only look the part better it wouldn't be so hard to bear."

During the next week Paula and Marian discussed many ways of life. Paula's idea at first was to do something very reckless, something that would cause people to turn and stare at her and say all sorts of queer things, but she could not make up her mind what to do. One must have a partner in recklessness as in a quarrel, and her list of eligibles did not furnish one on whom she could depend.

Then she decided to retire from the world, to the chagrin of her mother, the disarray of arrangements and disappointment of hostesses, she declined a week-end party and two dinners already accepted. It was necessary at length for Marian to act as peacemaker, and explain to Mrs. Crown that these refusals were not the result of childish moods, but came from the deep-seated conviction that life was a failure and that Paula had finished with its superficialities forever.

Mrs. Crown took the announcement more mildly than Marian had dared expect.

"I hope she will let me know if she intends really to enter a sisterhood. It is her birthday next week and they are holding two turquoise necklaces at Tiffany's for her choice. In that case I should have to countermand the order."

The next day the Apostle of Peace announced that she and Paula had sat up half the night and that finally the claims of a loving family and friends had prevailed, and, for the present at least, Paula had decided to give up the sisterhood.

"I don't wonder," said Marian when she returned, "dear Paula, that there are many lonely moments in your life.

Such a chasm as separates your mother's temperament from yours. She is so worldly! Really, her smile when I told her of your sacrifice and her saying that about the necklace immediately. There are none who understand us so little as those of our own households."

"I don't blame her as I did," said Paula charitably. "Perhaps she, too, had a disappointment when she was young."

"But she married—you never could do that."

"No," said Paula impressively. "At least, not for a long, long time, not until I have drained the cup of pleasure to the dregs, not until I have made many men suffer as I have suffered, and then it will only be for prestige, social position, money—not for love. I do not believe in love. The one redeeming grace of my terrible position is that the truth has come to me early. Now you, Marian, may wait years for your awakening, and then—who knows?"

Although Wainwright had joked about his lapse from temperate grace, he really took the subject to heart. His well-groomed, sane appearance was a type of mind and spirit. He realized that he had come near to social disgrace and the fact that circumstances had chanced to help him did not make the fault less condemnatory to himself; the same thing might have happened when the result would have been one, perhaps, of lifelong regret. If Hanson had not entered the room when he did what might he not have said?—and to Paula Crown of all people, a girl he had been at least a half-dozen times on the point of asking to marry him.

Twice had he met her since the unfortunate occurrence and was still in doubt whether she suspected the insult he had paid her hospitality. Once at a reception they had exchanged commonplaces and once he had met her driving with her mother in the Park. Both times something elusive, intangible, made him believe that she

had changed toward him, but could it not be his own sensitiveness?

The "not-at-home" he had received from the stately James when he called hid the usual secret by which society has decreed that a family may protect itself from a distinct revelation of disregard.

Ten days after his fiasco, they were guests at a theatre-party given by a mutual friend who, not entirely ignorant of Wainwright's admiration, arranged that he should have the seat next Paula. She acknowledged his entrance gracefully and then turned her attention to a young Britisher on her other side, who divided his sentiments plainly between her and a shapely show girl on the stage.

She certainly was offended. He was sure of it at last. There was something besides coquetry in the tilt of her head and the curve of her lip. Had he said something he should not, that unlucky afternoon, or had she simply resented the knowledge of his condition?

He took the first opportunity to say in a low, feeling voice:

"Paula, are you angry with me?"

Job, hearing the tone, in his day and generation, would have withdrawn any claims he might have possessed to the patent of meekness.

She trembled a little, but her face was mutinously repellent.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Wainwright. Why should I be angry?"

"I don't know; that is what worries me. If I were only conscious of having done anything to offend, so I might apologize."

Astonishment, disgust and a certain baffled perplexity fought for supremacy in Paula's face. She turned to listen to a remark of her chaperon and, doing so, tried to make up her mind how to answer. Should she treat the subject lightly, refuse to discuss it and never let him know that she had taken his proposal seriously, or should she follow the impulse of a sincere nature and tell him what she thought of him! She decided on the first line of action and

followed the second, as is the way of femininity.

He would hope against hope that the worst that had happened had been the utterance of some foolish remark. Hanson had asseverated that they had been together only a moment or two. Certainly she could not have been cognizant of anything strange in that time, in a dark room. He would take his chances on this belief.

"I've wanted to apologize ever since the day of your reception. I'm sure I said something to offend you. I'm such an unlucky devil. Every time I get into a big crowd the noise and heat get on my nerves so that I lose all self-control. I say any old fool thing that comes into my head and I don't even remember what it is ten minutes afterward. Hanson will tell you that is so. He's taken me to account for it scores of times."

Judging from the stony expression of Paula's face, he had not made the matter any better by his explanation.

"Tell me what I said," he urged penitently. "I wasn't in earnest. I swear I wasn't."

"It was a matter of little consequence," said Paula in a tone so colorless that she was as surprised as she was proud of herself. "You merely told me you loved me and asked me to marry you."

If the theatre-box had been any other place Wainwright would have done something desperate. Certainly no man was ever in a worse fix. Why had he been so hasty? If he had allowed her to take the initiative, he might have saved himself. Now it was too late.

After the laconic explanation, Paula faced squarely toward the play. It was all up with him! No, he would not admit defeat. There was one way left, the way the average man leaves until he has tried every other. He would tell her the truth. Of course, she would say that his second proposal was merely a matter of honor, but he would force her to believe in his sincerity.

There were two vacant chairs in the

rear of the box. He glanced toward them, then at the back of Paula's head, which did not look promising. One hand was hanging loosely at her side, holding her fan. He was unobserved and, leaning forward, he inclosed it in his own and whispered:

"Paula, it's a matter of life and death with me! Will you let me explain?"

The clown of the play was caroling gleefully, with singular appropriateness:

"Ask every girl you meet to marry you,
Don't neglect Annie, don't forget Sue."

How he loathed the crass stupidity of circumstance, but as luck would have it, Paula was not listening. She followed him, half-unwillingly, yet as

if she were obeying an impulse of interest or curiosity, and took the chair he held with a manner of deep-seated dejection. Some of the party, noting their withdrawal, glanced meaningfully, and Marian's eyes looked like the corona of the sun in a total eclipse.

It was late that night before the same eyes regained their normal size and expression. Paula, as she thrust her arms into the sleeves of a riotous-looking garment of Oriental make and her feet into some scarlet and gold slippers, explained, without entering too closely into unpleasant details, that until a woman has once forgiven a man she never really knows what love is.



IN A SNOWSTORM

YOU see in yon blind swirl that blurs the sky,
Sharp winter's admonition; the chill threat
That days tempestuous above us set
At last to its white climax brought; but I,
Through some strange magic of the mind, descry
A shower of citron blossoms 'neath whose net
All save youth's passionate glamour I forget
In a walled garden of old Tripoli.

In the blast's swoop and eddy you discern
Only mad discords, warped and tortured strings
Swept by insensate winter's cruel hand;
While I toward strains of rapturous music turn,
Moved to fond dreams, to sweet imaginings,
By love's low lutings in a summer land.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



WISE GIRL

"WHAT did you do when he kissed you?"
"I called mama."
"Why didn't you call your father?"
"Mama was out."

THE OTHER VOICE

By W. C. Morrow

EVEN Harley's genial bravery could not divert my crushing sense of failure. Every hope that made the prospect bright had been staked on my performance that night. Had the second-voice of my violin been true, I should have leaped into the eminence that I had come to think was assured. Instead, the wonderful undertone that of late had been singing in the strings was suddenly dumb, and my playing had fallen flat and foolish on the glittering audience holding my fate in its verdict. Nothing but the dreadful humdrum of teaching stretched ahead.

"How do you account for it?" Harley asked in my studio, to which he had come after the concert.

He meant my failure; for, dearly as I loved the rich, idle, thoughtless fellow, who appeared to care for nothing but his respectably dissolute life of fashion, I had never taken him into the secret of the second-voice. It would be a thing easy to laugh at, and Harley laughed easily. I was too dulled by despair to note at the moment the repressed eagerness in his tone, but I turned toward him in time to discover, as he lay indolently on my couch, the quick extinguishing of an unexpected light in his eyes.

"I can't account for it," I fatuously—and disingenuously—answered.

He studied one of his patent-leather shoes as he tapped the toe with his cane.

"And you've established your life on a slip like that," he remarked.

The friendship which the sunny lad had developed for me was incomprehensible; but I knew why I loved him,

and I was aware that he had the deep, sweet wisdom to which the indolent are born.

"Such a slip is significant, Harley," I returned. "A man must not miss in determining crises of his life."

"No. Of course not. The thing is to know whether he has really missed or not, or may find the cause removable."

It was said in his usual inconsequential way, yet it stirred me as had my knowledge that in my studio-playing, which had given birth to my hope, the second-voice had stood beside me and sung happiness to me out of my violin. I said nothing.

"Did you notice a disturbance in the audience while you were playing?"

"No."

I waited for him to explain. Instead of doing so, he laid the cane beside him, lazily locked his hands under his head, and gazed at the ceiling.

"Odd, too," he went on, "from such a girl. She is the quietest, dreamiest—I wish you could hear her play."

"What does she play?"

"The violin."

"Who is she?"

"Olga Hasting."

The name awoke my memory of a half-confidential remark by Jeffrey to me one day that I need not be surprised to hear an announcement of Harley's engagement to Olga Hasting. Yet, so frank and confidential in all other matters, Harley had never mentioned her to me until now, and I had never seen her. His reticence must be respected.

"The wealthy society girl?" I asked.

"Yes."

"That is a Scandinavian name," I remarked.

"Yes, but she was born here. Fine blood, and mystical. She has come bodily out of the Sagas. To think that she of all the world should make a disturbance in public."

"Where, Harley?"

"At the concert. Tonight. When you played." It was always an effort for the lazy fellow to talk.

"I didn't see it. What did she do?"

Instead of answering, he yawned, laboriously sat up, and, glancing at the clock on the mantel, dragged to his feet, strode across the room to my violin-case, opened it, and removed the beautiful instrument as though it were a baby and might be hurt by awkward handling. He examined it with a solemnly critical air.

"Ugly old fiddle," he gravely said of my matchless Stradivarius, on which he had squandered a prince's ransom that I might have it. That was when he had thought I would take rank as a great violinist.

He brought it to me, with the bow. Only casually did I see his second furtive glance at the clock.

"See if it's in tune," he said.

I humored him by sweeping my thumb across the strings. He noticed the jangle.

"Tune it," he said.

When that was done he looked me over and drawlingly asked if I really liked to resemble an orchestra fiddler, who sat at his work? The hint brought me grumbling to my feet. Why did he insist on deepening my hurt by making me compel the violin to proclaim my defeat and despair? Again I detected him glancing at the clock, and making such an effort to appear only sympathetic that he bungled his habitual ease; I am certain that his tripping on the rug was not an accident.

"The Träumerei," he suggested.

"That is too thin for a single instrument."

"Thick enough for my third dimension. Try it."

"Don't be foolish, Harley. That composition is a dream, and it must be

dreamed with a whole and overflowing heart. Mine is broken and empty."

His manner had been rapidly steady-ing and hardening, and his eyes were taking on a glitter that I had never seen in them before. He had paled. One hand was clutching the back of a chair, and I saw the fingers whiten and heard the wood crack under the strain.

He must have discovered the surprise gathering in my face as I stared at him, and he realized that it meant further delay. He withdrew his hand from the chair. I had never heard him laugh so inanely as he did then. But it did not deceive me. He recovered his dignity, and with it an entirely new air of command. Often his manner toward me had been a genial, affectionate bullying, but here was something else.

"Play it," he quietly insisted, but his eyes grew smaller and deeper. He glanced at the clock, and fell into a carved attitude.

"What is the matter?" I asked in alarm, slipping the violin from under my chin.

"I must admit," he answered, with a coldness barely concealing his anger, and with an obvious effort to control his voice, "that I am annoyed at your refusal to please me."

"Why, lad," I returned in astonishment, "I didn't understand that it meant anything to you! You've never before——"

"Play!" he demanded.

Wondering, I brought the chin-rest into place, and dashed through a preliminary minor run down the strings. The familiar exercise surprised me. Never had it been anything but a passage to test the fingers, the bow, the strings. Now it waited startlingly, like an unmated soul emitting a feeble cry out of loneliness and darkness. Unconsciously I paused after it, trying to hear the last of a sigh fading in the distance. Then as unconsciously my bow swung into the Träumerei.

I knew. A hand was fused with mine that held the bow and with mine that stopped the strings; but more wonderful was the duplicate string

stretched with each one on my violin, and dreaming with it under my bow. *That* was the string which, so constant of late in my studio practice, had wholly deserted me at the concert and abandoned me to disaster. It was the Other Voice which had sung in unison with my voice—the completion of me, the half that, when withdrawn, left the remainder worse than impotent.

Such was the secret that I had withheld from Harley, for the lad laughed easily.

From the *Träumerei* I passed to another and still another composition. Harley was forgotten; the blasted, blackened hopes were gradually disappearing under strong green vines that grew and twined luxuriantly over them.

I was startled by the squeeze of strong arms closing over mine from behind, but Harley's low laugh in my ear fitted in perfectly as the vanishing echo of my dream.

"I knew it, I knew it!" he exclaimed, with a gentle fervor quite alien to his usual demeanor. He turned me round, peered into my face, and ruefully shook his head. "Gone!" he lugubriously remarked. "That look when you were playing. I'd hate for any of my sweethearts to see it."

"What do you mean?" I blankly asked, for the pain had returned.

"I mean," he answered, taking the violin and bow and placing them in the case, which he closed and snapped, "that we'll have to hurry. Get out of that smoking-jacket." He began rummaging my closet.

"What for?"

He softly whistled the *Träumerei*. "Which?" he mused, holding up two coats. "Tail or dinner-coat? Tail, of course. Out of that jacket, I say!" he stormed, advancing.

Purely by instinct I doffed the garment as he held the waistcoat up in both hands. But I stopped there.

"Slip into this," he urged.

There was nothing else to do. Nobody could resist Harley. He picked up the coat from a chair, but abruptly

paused in a listening attitude as he started to hold it for my donning.

"There it is now! I knew you wouldn't be ready." He slammed the coat on me as though the house were afire.

"What is it?" I demanded, half my breath shaken out of me as he whirled me about in a tornado of hurry.

"The carriage."

"What for?"

"There's the coachman now, thumping up the steps!" Harley dragged me to the lavatory and thrust a brush into my hand. "Smooth your hair—quick!"

I obeyed in a daze. It was just like his generous, thoughtful heart to have ordered a carriage, for a drive with him would be comforting; but I hardly saw the need of an evening-coat and smooth hair.

"Why all this preparation?" I asked, facing him from the lavatory. He was nearly dancing with impatience, and that was quite unlike him.

"You don't mean to say," he tragically answered as he tossed a note on the table and started to the door to meet the coachman, "that you didn't see the messenger bring *that* while you were playing? Read it."

I found a note addressed to Harley and signed "Olga Hasting." The ink was fresh. It was written with the cordial informality of an understanding friendship, and begged him to come at once and bring his friend, for they were all waiting.

"This is urgent," I reminded him. "You haven't time to take me for a drive."

"Down immediately," said Harley to the coachman, who lingered at the door with his red face, as though a gentleman might remember a cupboard and a glass, and then clumped away. "Muffler, overcoat, hat—hurry, man!" He was already into his and had seized my violin-case. His extraordinary eagerness spurred me.

I abruptly stopped as he was thrusting me toward the door, and firmly announced that I would not go with him to the young lady's house.

"Why not?" he inquired in bland and innocent surprise.

"She is a stranger to me. I'm tired and sick, and——"

His reply was a whirl that sent me spinning through the door, and his laugh smothered the fire kindled in me by the indignity as he mobbed me all the way out to the carriage and jammed me within.

My breath returned as the carriage rumbled on.

"Do you expect me to play for her after that dreadful——?"

"I expect you to be what you always are—a gentleman," he rapped out.

I was careful to keep the laugh inside of me from slipping away. And I was coming really to enjoy this new and astonishing phase of my friend. He had all at once brought a dash of the dramatic into my gray life.

"But why *her*?" I insisted.

I felt the lad stiffen beside me in the dark, and guessed that it was a struggle against an inner sinking. Indeed, I imagined that ever since his first uneasy glance at my clock a certain desperate exaltation had possessed him, such as might nerve a broken man to plunge on toward the edge of a waiting precipice.

"It's an experiment," he answered, with a carelessness that I knew was fictitious.

Shame and grief had done their wicked work of selfishness, blinding me to every outlook on my kind. Had the wings of some tragedy unsuspected by me rustled in the hidden places of my friend's life? My deeper faculties began to wake.

"You took her to the concert, I think," was my indifferent remark.

"Yes."

"You said that she made a disturbance."

"Quite a disturbance."

"While I was playing?"

"Yes."

"What did she do?" I felt the necessity of being merciless.

"Eh?" after a silence.

"What did she do?"

He stirred himself and stiffly sat upright.

"I have never seen so agonized a look on a human face," he slowly and seriously answered. "She forgot all about me. Sprang to her feet, saying to herself that she must go home and get it."

"Get what?"

"She didn't say."

"Did you know—or guess?"

"Not then."

"Did she go?"

"No. I forcibly detained her. She sat down and cried." He was talking as a hypnotized subject to the controlling agent. And, knowing his elliptical way of speaking, I surmised that more had happened than he reported.

"You took her home before coming to me, of course," I remarked.

"Of course."

"And arranged with her for taking me to her house tonight."

"Yes, conditionally."

"Why did you do that?"

He hesitated. "She waited at the door of the concert-hall. As the people passed out she invited a number of the right sort to her home tonight." Harley no doubt had reasons for thus evading an answer to my question.

"What for?"

"She said your failure had been merely a mistake."

"And she wishes me to redeem and establish myself by playing for them?"

"Exactly."

"That is extraordinary. Why does she take all that trouble for me?"

Harley ignored the question.

I did not remember having thrust her note into my pocket, but I was aware that I had it. Indeed, I clearly saw every word of it, and all at once found something familiar in the peculiar slant of the writing and in the faint and delicate perfume of the paper. These discoveries came with another. I did not find myself shrinking from the performance before Miss Hasting's guests, nor wondering at anything. Yet my state was not apathetic. On the contrary, a subtle palpitation, which seemed ethereal and to be throb-

bing all about me, had set up a thrill that ran to the remotest parts of my being.

"Of course, you have heard her play the violin," I said, recalling his remark, but conscious on the instant of knowing that she had been using the instrument for years.

"Of course."

"Does she play well?"

"Marvelously—at times."

"Not always?"

"Not always. I've seen her fail as you did tonight." His voice had the monotony of one talking while asleep.

"What caused it?"

Instead of answering he lurched against me, and grumbled at the coachman's awkwardness in striking the curb while turning a corner. I had not noticed the accident. With hesitation I asked:

"Has she ever explained why she plays well at one time and badly at another?"

"Have you ever explained why you play well at one time and badly at another?" he retorted.

A tingling silence held me, and my breath fluttered in my throat. It was hard to be grilling my friend with questions that tortured him and that he answered so strangely, but the greed of a man fighting through flames for the open air was upon me.

"Harley," I said, laying an affectionate hand on his knee, "you told me just now that you were to take me to her house conditionally. What did you mean?"

From a certain slow and heroic preparation I expected him to make a long speech or an important one.

"Divinely as she plays at times, she has never taken a lesson. Yet her finish is professional and perfect, like—like yours. You know that I hunt out good musicians. Jeffrey took me to your studio. . . . It was a tremendous shock."

"What was?"

"Your playing. I thought it was she."

My pulse, which had been quickening, was racing now, and I removed

my hand lest he feel it quivering on his knee.

My love for the lad was so great that at every hazard I must prevent the intrusion of any separating issue between us, and he was acting in a way that alarmed my sense of friendly secureness. How could I approach my great secret? That it was bound up in the drama of this night I could not doubt; and why should timidity on any account stay me? Sitting beside me was the kindest, gentlest, royalest friend that ever a man had.

"Harley," I asked, "did you hear anything besides my violin when I played the *Träumerei* for you?"

A slight shock hardened him, and he sat as though cast in bronze.

"Did you?" he presently asked very faintly.

I had determined to make the plunge. "Yes," I answered. "It was——"

"Stop!" His hand came down with an iron clutch on my wrist. "There's plenty of time. I want to see it myself." Soon I heard his breathing resume.

"But I don't want you to see it!" I announced, rising to pull the signal-strap.

With a violent jerk he thrust me down on the seat and firmly held my arm. I was not to be suppressed so easily. Misunderstanding is greater even than uncharity in making trouble between friends. I was fixed on having it out clear with the lad.

"You were watching the clock," I said. "You put the violin in my hands when a certain moment had arrived. You wished to test a coincidence, for you had agreed with someone to compel my playing the *Träumerei*, at that time. Then when——"

"No more of that!" he cried. "Wait. And hadn't I the sacred right to do so? Don't talk. I can't bear it."

We were soon at Olga Hasting's door. She herself met us, and appeared to avoid a full look into my face, peering past me, instead, in search of Harley. In that instant she

was only an impression of young and radiant blond loveliness, shy, much frightened and ready to flee if a friendly face did not appear.

Harley was slow in stepping forward, and her quick look of dismay turned my glance to his haggard face, which was wearing a painful grimace for the smile that he could so winningly use.

"My friend," she exclaimed in a voice that set the *Träumerei* singing within me, and she gave him her hand.

He took it gravely, and introduced us. Her face crimsoned and her eyes fell as she took my hand.

"You brought it," she said, with a look at the violin-case in Harley's hand. "I had forgotten all about it. Leave your coats and hats in the library. I'll wait for you here."

Without a word Harley and I quickly made ourselves ready. His manner was nervous and impatient. He took my violin from its case and handed it to me, with only a glance out of his sunken eyes; but the saturation filling me blinded me to the suffering that a more composed state would have enabled me to see. Our hostess was awaiting us. Avoiding any but a quick and embarrassed glance at me, she said:

"The accompanist that you had at the concert is at the piano, and the people are waiting. Will you play now?"

"Yes, but I brought no music."

"No music?" Her face was turned away, but I heard in her voice such a sweet wistfulness as never before had come from a woman to me. "You mean notes. You don't need them for the *Träumerei*."

"No."

"You will play that?"

"If you wish."

I did not notice what became of Harley as she led me to that end of the large drawing-room where the piano stood. Nor, on facing the audience seated in formal rows, was I conscious of more than the glittering jewels and sheening rich gowns of one sex and the somber black and white of the other.

Only with a vague consciousness was I aware of the curious look on the face of my accompanist as she raised her eyes to mine and struck the tuning chord. I saw only that the droop and the apprehension in her bearing suddenly disappeared.

A glance about failed me in a search for Olga and Harley. What better time than this for her sweetly private offices in rehabilitating him?

Without fear or falter, the *Träumerei* began to slip off the strings, and in the very first note I found a warm, soft hand fused with mine that held the bow and another with mine that stopped the strings, and heard the dreaming of the duplicate string stretched with each on my violin, and joyously leaping to the pressure of my bow. It was the Other Voice, which already in my studio had sung hope into my life before the concert, and afterward had banished the despair; the half without which the remainder was the meanest of nonentities.

With my own eyes I saw the Dream pour in a torrent from my violin and go forth an embracing light. Blank, blasé masks rising out of gleaming necks and shoulders and out of depressing black and white, wavered in foolish consciousness of their wearing, and from common human shame slipped down, that God and all the angels appealing to the outlook of earthly souls might stand forth unabashed in mortal presence. Then I knew, as I had not supposed was possible, that women and men sat in beautiful flesh and spirit before me, divinely individual, yet bound together in sympathy. And they were not ashamed to be children of heaven. That was the miracle.

The Dream drifted into its minor strains, and the Shadow softly fell. There had been exaltation before; there was chastening now. Sad memories fluttered on gentle wings throughout the room; the dead, nearly forgotten, that once had been loved, came forth in living warmth, and kissed into bloom lips that the world had chilled and hardened into cold forgetfulness.

Comforting messages came whispering from far shores; a finger was pressed in kindly warning on pallid lips, but a reassuring smile dimpled under the touch. And not only had the beautiful individualized flesh and spirit facing me lost all shame for being children of heaven, but in taking grief and sorrow and the cherished dead by hand, found an angel in the clasp, and through angel eyes saw the farther shore of a shining river that God, standing on the other side, was bridging with mercy and love. That was the greater miracle.

The minor swelled into its passionate crescendo, through sorrow triumphing over the Shadow, yet minor still. All the doors open for those already dead, but now standing forth out of the grave, and for those expecting death, were closed with a mighty clanging, and there were none dead and none entombed, and never had been; but all were living and had been always living, and would live forever. All of that shone in the beautiful flesh and spirit facing me. And that was the greatest miracle.

The minor slowly descended and faded, and the returning major swung true again, a rainbow after the flood. All the seals on the mysteries had been broken; I knew my people and they knew me. But my poor hand that moved the bow and my poor fingers that stopped the strings were but the perfected instruments through which the Other Voice, matched and mated with its blind and groping half, had sung its quickening soul into the sordid, slumbering souls confronting me.

Through the living silence I walked till I found her standing in the passage, behind an angle which had screened her from me while I played. Her pendent hands held one a violin and the other a bow. But her glance was not shy now, nor yet the least bold; her fronting look into my face held the re-

pose and confidence of a perfect companionship. I approached her in awe and reverence as she stood in the unconscious exultation of her womanhood. Her beautiful eyes were glowing; her ripe lips were parted; and every line of her gracious attitude proclaimed that she was waiting and expectant. I came near.

"You were playing in unison with me," I said.

"Yes."

"And you have thus played with me many a time."

"Yes. But I didn't understand then. I couldn't see."

"At the concert tonight——"

"I saw then; I understood. I wanted to come home and get my violin."

"To save me?"

"Yes. But—but he detained me. . . . I invited these friends. I asked him to go to you and make you play the *Träumerei*. I would be ready. He had suggested it to me. He said he wanted to test—to find out——"

"Where is he?" I interrupted, looking about.

"I—I don't know. He was there, behind me, I think, when we began to play. He must be in the library. We'll find him."

As a stir and a hum were starting the awaking audience, she and I passed to the library. My friend was not there. A hurried search discovered a note on the table; it was addressed to Olga and me, and I read it aloud:

"DEAREST FRIENDS OF MY LIFE: *Probatum est*. I start for Europe in half an hour, and am leaving my fullest love and blessing for you both.

"HARLEY."

Olga's face was white but brave as she gazed at me across the table.

"He was the sweetest, kindest friend that I ever had," she said, her voice wavering and her eyes filling, as though she had spoken of the dead.



A BALLADE OF THE ROAD

WHAT throng is this that sweeps along
 The Road of Life so madly gay,
 With lilt of lute, and burst of song
 And whirl of dance beside the way?
 Their brows are garlanded with bay,
 With laurels, flowers and heavy yews;
 And jewels flash where shadows play—
Voilà le monde ou l'on s'amuse!

Resistless, jubilantly strong,
 Their marching song's a strident lay;
 And, striving, struggling on, the throng
 Tramples a road where none may stay.
 Wild is their laugh that veils dismay,
 Tears are their roses' scalding dew,
 Glittering lies the words they say—
Voilà le monde ou l'on s'amuse!

The lords of life have ruled it wrong
 To linger in life's lovely day!
 Ever the Driver's whistling thong
 Hangs in the air—who lags must pay!
 There is no time to plead or pray
 For respite that the lords refuse—
 For leave from these dread ranks to stray—
Voilà le monde ou l'on s'amuse!

ENVOI

Beggar or prince, your comrades they,
 Whatever the kind of life you choose;
 Fettered in gold or bound in clay—
Voilà le monde ou l'on s'amuse!

HAROLD HEATON.



HOW IT WAS POSSIBLE

"I TOLD a man exactly what I thought of him today."
 "Yes, the telephone is a great invention."



ONE-HALF the world may not know how the other half lives, but it is eternally trying to find out.

BRIDGET, BUSTER OF BUSTS

By William Hamilton Osborne

I AM a collector, a gatherer-in, of busts. It is my hobby just at present—my fad. Other men are golfing, auto-touring, committing murder and suicide and perpetrating voluntary bankruptcy in a score of other ways; none of this strenuous existence for me. Just so long as the market is flooded with them—just so long as I have two dollars and ninety-eight cents in my pockets, it is busts for *mine*. I have had other crazes. I went into vases in the nineties when the tariff was off; I loaded up well with Royal Worcester, Doulton, Copenhagen; my table was graced with French, German and Austrian wares, but—they put the tariff up again; porcelain went up. I lost interest in things; I pined away. At last, however, one happy day, Providence thrust in my way a bust of Caligula, at a Thirty-first street auction sale, and I succumbed. For the tariff evidently had been removed from busts.

"Going—going at three and a quarter," cried the auctioneer.

I lost control of myself. "Gone—at three and a half," I shouted at the top of my lungs. And I got it—the bust of Caligula. That is to say, I *think* it is Caligula. I am never quite sure of these gentlemen on pedestals, and when people ask me who this piece of bronze might be, or that bit of marble, I always quote to myself beneath my breath, my favorite bit of verse:

I recognize Dante because he's tab-eared,
And Virgil I tell by his wreath;
Old Homer I know by his rough, shaggy
beard,

And the rest—by the names underneath.

In other words, the same method is adopted as in the case of a bit of

porcelain. If you are sitting at a man's table and half suspect that his cream-pitcher is an American imitation of Limoges, all that you need do is to turn it upside down and— I did it once, with a chocolate-pot, at Llewellyn's—my next-door neighbor's—when no one was looking. I found that it *was* a chocolate-pot, with real chocolate in it, too. I didn't investigate further. I was not much interested anyhow, for it was about at that time that I lost interest in porcelains. I *think*, however, it was American, for the tariff was up, and I don't believe that Llewellyn is the kind of man to squander fortunes on Limoges.

It is about my next-door neighbor, Llewellyn, that I am about to speak. Some years ago, when we built our cottages side by side, we formed the kind of friendship that impelled us to make birthday presents to each other. I started in—I was young then—by giving him a thirty-dollar rug for his reception hall; he returned the compliment with a thirty-dollar piano-lamp. I guess we both wish we had the thirty dollars now. With it I could buy busts, and he could go off on them. However, this custom of birthday giving had continued. I think that we both felt that there was no stopping-place. Neither of us dared to cease the custom.

It was a few days before Llewellyn's last birthday that the missus and I stepped into the Green store to make our usual annual purchase for Llewellyn.

"This time," I said, "it must be a bust. The tariff——"

I stopped, for my wife was picking

up one of the most exquisite pieces of bronze that I have ever seen. I have visited the Metropolitan Museum on free days without stint—I spend carfare like a prince sometimes, when I am in the mood—and in all my wanderings through marble, brass or bronze, I have never seen a more stunning piece of workmanship. It was so stunning that I feared that it would never do for Llewellyn.

"It's worth twenty-five dollars and ninety-eight cents, at least," I said to the missus. But she called a clerk.

"How much for this?" she queried. The clerk named the price. It took my breath away.

"Why—why," I stammered in delight, "a beneficent Congress must have been at work in great shape. It's a stunner, Lydia. Why, why—it's just the very thing for Llewellyn. To be sure."

We took it—we couldn't help it. And that evening we rushed into Llewellyn's house and thrust it upon him. It stunned him at first. I know what he was thinking. He was saying to himself:

"What did this jay get such a tony thing for me for? I'll have to blow a twenty-dollar bill to get even with the cuss."

But I didn't give him time to think. "It's Lycurgus," I informed him—and I have no doubt it was. It was beautiful—a head covered with curly hair, a heavy neck, a nose and jaw that stood well out into the air, something about the throat that might be the top end of a toga, or a lay-down collar, and real eyes that could see. None of your blind busts for me.

Llewellyn groaned with joy. "Lycurgus," I knew he was saying within himself. "Gee! This means fifty dollars if it means a cent."

He was so overcome that in his delight he tried to force it back upon me. "It is too much, Blenkinsop, old boy," he told me, "too much. How can I ever thank you, don't you know?"

But he did thank me, and very substantially, later. It was only right, too. For I'm a man with birth-

days just as well as he. And it was on my birthday that he brought it—It—in. And then I knew that he had blown himself, indeed.

"Knowing your weakness," he exclaimed. It was another bust; but evidently it was not a Green store bust. It was not bronze. It was white—apparently of pure Italian marble. Its workmanship was exquisite.

"This certainly cost money," I told Lydia, my spouse, in a whisper; "it certainly did, and no mistake."

"Of course you know who it is?" suggested Llewellyn.

There was no apparent venom in this remark. "Of course," I replied, looking for the name underneath. Of course there was no name. I paused a moment.

"You're not stuck, are you?" he laughed.

"I'm admiring it," I responded. I did a lot of thinking. The bust was the bust of a man with a full beard, broad forehead, bald in front, the hair grown long in front of the ears, aquiline nose with the slightest possible re-troussé effect on the tip, and the collar, waistcoat and lapels of a statesman.

"The face is familiar," I ventured. "I have an excellent memory for faces, but the name somehow slips me. I can't just recall it now."

Llewellyn thrust his thumb into my ribs. "It's James G. Blaine," he answered triumphantly.

"To be sure," I replied. Now, I knew he was wrong. I had seen Blaine—had heard him make political speeches in the old skating-rink downtown. I knew *him* and his pictures by sight anywhere. And this wasn't Blaine. But if it wasn't Blaine, who was it? That was the question. It may have been somebody; it may have been nobody. But at any rate, that bust was a mystery for many a long day.

"It can't be Caligula or Lycurgus," I told my wife, "for their frock-coats and standing collars didn't fit just like this man's do. Who can it be?"

People came and people went—all

of them inspecting my stock of busts. But none could name the name of this white Italian marble mystery. Even Llewellyn admitted that it wasn't Blaine.

"It's a funny thing, though," he said, "that you knew the name of the one you gave me, and didn't know this one. By the way, *what* is the name of mine?"

"Pericles," I replied. I had told him Lycurgus. But I didn't want him to go pottering over old pictures of Lycurgus for ages, and then come to me and tell me it wasn't Lycurgus. So I thought it well to give him another name and another man to think about. By the time he had satisfied himself that it wasn't Pericles, I would have time to look up some other name.

However, it was at this juncture that Bridget Doyle entered the arena of events. I have forgotten to mention that the most valuable member of Llewellyn's family was not himself, nor his wife, nor any of his children. The paragon was Delia. I may say, also, that my wife and I, knowing of the virtues of this Delia, had attempted—by perfectly legitimate means, of course—to entice Delia from the Llewellyns' and get her for ourselves. We had had marvelously bad luck with girls, and—well, we wanted Delia, anyway.

"How much does Mrs. Llewellyn pay?" my wife inquired casually of Delia one day.

"Fifteen a month," Delia responded.

Then I plunged in. "I'll make it fifteen twenty-five, Delia," I ventured.

I think the Llewellyns smelt a mouse. At any rate, it was quite apparent that they desired to checkmate us. Llewellyn came across the lawn one evening.

"Blenkie, old boy," he began, "I hear from Delia that you've had a devil of a time with help."

"I hope," I answered, "that Delia does not repeat matters that she happens to hear in my house, or while hanging out the clothes." I was

afraid that she had given us away. Llewellyn smiled.

"Not at all," he answered, "only she said that you were in hard luck, and I thought that we could help you out. And Delia asked me to speak to you about it."

"Fire ahead," I commanded.

"Delia says," he went on, "that she has a sister Bridget in the old country. She's willing to pay her way over here, if you'll write to Bridget and offer her a job. Delia says that Bridget is a better girl than she is herself."

"Give us her name," my wife joined in.

"Yes," I exclaimed enthusiastically, "we'll pay her fifteen fifty. Any old thing."

"All right," returned Llewellyn, "it's a go. I'll give you her address." He pulled out a paper.

"Miss Bridget Doyle," he went on; "got that?" I had written it.

"Boo-o-rbannagg-g-g-g-h," he continued.

"To be sure," I replied, as though I had at last come across one of my old geographical friends. Then an inspiration seized me.

"Here," I said, handing him the pad and pencil that I had, "don't dictate it. Just write it down yourself." He wrote it. I am glad he did. For this was the address:

Miss Bridget Doyle,
Boherbannagh,
Toomard Post Office,
Ballinamore Bridge,
County Galway,
Ireland.

He passed it over, and then glanced up at the Italian marble enigma which he had presented to me.

"Have you found out that old chap yet?" he asked.

I shook my head. "I'm on his trail," I replied, "though some two hundred and fifty people who've been here don't know him. I've had doctors, lawyers, merchants—everybody but thieves and Indian chiefs, and nobody knows it."

"I'm glad," he answered, "that you told me the name of my man. Pericles. Wasn't that it?"

"Mordecai," I replied gently. "Old Mordecai—in bronze."

Well, we wrote to Bridget and made our offer, and Delia sent the money, and Bridget, of Boherbannagh, came and saw and conquered. She was worth all of fifteen fifty; and I think at a Thirty-first street auction she would have been knocked down at not a penny less than fifteen seventy-five.

She was a superfine article—not to be compared, perhaps, with Llewellyn's bronze piece, or my Italian marble. She was done in what seemed to me to be New Jersey terra cotta; or possibly a fine grade of New Durham brick dust. Her hair was arranged in a sort of Psyche knot, adorned with meat-skewers, to keep it in shape—possibly, also, it was a good place to have the skewers handy in case they were needed for the management of a refractory roast. However, she was a good one—except possibly for her habit of keeping her cooking butter, by the pound, dashed by the lump up against the kitchen mantelpiece ready to pick to pieces as she needed it. Before I saw Bridget I never really knew what a bog-trotter was. But I could understand now. She waddled through our house as though the floor were composed of big, rounded roots of grass, few and far between, and as though her life depended upon her keeping her balance. But she had a good hand on her. She understood herself—and the rest of us, too, I guess.

"Though I don't care about thim min a-lookin' at a poor gur-er-r-l all the time," she'd say. She referred to my collection of busts. I'm glad she did, because otherwise I should have forgotten to ask my wife to tell her to be particular in dusting. A dusted bust too often spells ruin. For a long while, therefore, my wife did the dusting herself, but as Bridget began to show her capabilities, she ushered her into the delicacies of American house-keeping.

"Be careful of them, Bridget," she said finally, referring to the busts; "they're worth thousands and thousands of dollars."

Which was perfectly true, even though they may not have cost—well, they were worth money, anyhow.

"I wudn't hurt thim, the spalpeens," replied Bridget gently, "not if I was seven-fut Mike O'Connor at a County Galway fair, wid a skin full o' new corn, an' a shillalah in me hand. I wudn't do it, Muster Blenkinsfull." She burst into laughter.

"To think o' Mike," she whispered, "at a County Galway fair, wid all them heads in sight. Ooroooh! At that."

And so she started in. It was late in the afternoon and I had come home from work, tired, and had thrown myself down on the bed in my room to get about forty winks. I didn't get them.

For suddenly—upon the early evening air I heard a smothered exclamation, and then a thud, and then a crash.

"It's—a bust!" I gasped, my heart sinking within me. I rushed to the library, and so did my wife. And there—

There was Bridget Doyle of Boherbannagh, standing with arms akimbo, looking disdainfully down at the fragments of a bust upon the ground. One small piece was beneath her heel and she was grinding it enthusiastically into the carpet.

"Bridget!" I exclaimed. And then I stopped. For I had glanced at the shelf, and saw that the bust she had broken was the mystery—the bust that Llewellyn had given me; the Italian marble bust. I stooped down and tried to put the pieces together. And then I cried out once more.

"What do you think?" I exclaimed to my wife. "It *isn't* marble! Not at all. Look at it. It's—it's only porcelain, or some composition. What a cheat. And we thought it was the real thing. And it isn't worth any twenty-five at all. And——"

But there was Bridget, the culprit, taking it all in. "Bridget," I said, "this is awful! This was the best bust in my collection. And besides, it was the Enigma."

"The what?" she queried.

"The enigma," I repeated.

"Nothin' o' the sort," she answered. She turned to my wife.

"Ma'am," she explained, "it's this way. I gave it just a bit of a slap across the face of it. Just a bit—like that. And if Mike O'Connor had been here, he'd have—" She stamped again upon the floor.

"Och!" she exclaimed, "what did I do? Who wouldn't have done it? Show me the man that wouldn't have——"

"Och!" she exclaimed again, with a world of hate and contempt in her voice and features—Bridget was incarnate vengeance at that moment.

"Och!" she exclaimed, with another stamp and another scowl, "*it's Sa-a-a-alsbreec-e-ee, the ould divil. Down wid 'im!*"

She was right. It was, indeed, the eminent Lord Salisbury, of name and fame; the statesman of little old Great Britain. And *she* knew him; she did not need any name underneath. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—out of the mouth of Bridget did we learn wisdom. *She* knew, all right.

I found out that she knew, and that she was right. For I went down to several department stores next day to look about me and verify my information. I fetched up at the Green store—and my wife was with me.

"Have you anything in marble of Lord Salisbury?" I ventured to ask the clerk.

"Not in marble," he replied, "but we have a very fine opaque glass imitation of marble of Salisbury. I'll show you one."

He got it. Yes, Bridget *had* been right. And I was glad the circumstance had happened, after all. For it showed up the character of my friend Llewellyn. What would you think of a man, who, after receiving for his birthday a bronze bust which he conceded was worth twenty-five or thirty dollars—what would you think of him, when he returned the compliment by means of an opaque pressed-glass imitation marble image?

"How much is this?" I asked the clerk.

"One dollar ninety-eight," replied that personage. One dollar ninety-eight—oh, Llewellyn, Llewellyn!

We didn't buy it. It's hardly worth replacing. But as we were turning away, my wife caught my arm.

"Look, look!" she said. There, two aisles away, was Bridget, inspecting busts on her own account.

"I left her in charge of the house," exclaimed my wife. "What is she doing here?"

But there she was. And we did not disturb her. She was not the kind to brook disturbance. And when we reached home once more we found her there ahead of us.

And no sooner had we entered through the front door, than she led us up into the library.

"Wurra!" she exclaimed genially. "I fixed yez up. I fixed yez up wid a brown man. But he's a deal sight whiter than the white man that yez had. There he is. Luk at the likes of him. Ain't he every inch a gentleman? Ooroo!"

We looked. There, in the place of the late Lord Salisbury, stood a bronze bust—apparently bronze.

"Why—why—?" I protested. And then my wife laughed.

"Why," she said, "it's just like the bronze bust that you gave to Mr. Llewellyn on his birthday. To be sure it is!"

It was. And there stood Bridget beaming on it with approval. I did not demean myself by asking her who it might stand for. I was too sure that she knew. And I was too sure that I did not know.

And I know now that the bust I gave Llewellyn is not the bust of Lycurgus, or Pericles, or of Mordecai. For knowing Bridget of Boherbannagh as I do, I am well assured that if that bust is not the bust of St. Patrick or of Robert Emmet, it certainly must be the counterfeit presentment of Charles Stewart Parnell.

Later, Llewellyn called—with his wife. They saw the new bust in an instant.

"Just like ours," they said in unison.

"Who did you say it was?" queried Llewellyn. But I was ready for him.

"I've told you a dozen times already," I replied, "that it is the exact reproduction in bronze of Charles Martel, the Hammer."

Mrs. Llewellyn, who sometimes gets tired of talking busts, sniggered.

"Your Bridget is such a funny girl," she said; "she told us all about her breaking that marble bust we gave you. And she told us about her getting a new one for you. She's such a droll girl."

"I hope," ventured my wife, "that Bridget does not talk over with you the private affairs of our household here."

"Oh, not at all," answered Mrs. Llewellyn, "she only talks about herself. She's so droll—so very droll. She told us all about this accident, and about the Green store. And think of it, she even went so far as to tell us the price of this new bronze bust she bought. She's Americanized, all right. 'Eighty-five cents,' she says the clerk told her. 'Aw, g'wan,' she says she told the clerk, 'd'yez think I'm a greenhorn, do yez? G'wan, here's

all the money that I got, and it's all you get, at that.' She is so droll. And so she passed out her little seventy-nine cents and bought the bust. So droll!"

I gulped. "Oh, well," I answered as best I could, "so long as she doesn't talk about us, why, it's all right, you see."

We have had two more birthdays, Llewellyn and I. He gave me two good cigars, and I returned the compliment with a pack of fancy playing-cards—with the tariff off. But, after all, I think Bridget, our girl, and Delia, his girl, hit it off just about right. They don't make birthday presents to each other, ever. But on Christmas morning Delia comes over and gives Bridget a five-dollar bill in money, and on Christmas afternoon Bridget goes over there and gives Delia a five-dollar gold piece. It is quite a satisfaction to them both, I am ready to believe. Bridget is happy all the time.

"For Mike O'Connor's comin' over," she told me yesterday, "an' say, Muster Blinkinfop, ye'll want to hide them heads when Mike comes in the back way with his shillalah. Oh, wurra, wurra! Oorooh! Oorooh!"



THE UNFORGOTTEN

IT is all calm, this love you give to me.
 My life goes gently in a cloistered hold
 Whose windows open to the scanty gold
 Of tender twilight on a quiet sea.
 This is the joy I thought might never be,
 The comfort granted and the ease untold;
 This is the dream fulfilled, that, in the old
 Merciless days, I sought for wearily.

Oh, strange, most strange, that from this peace I turn
 To think of one who rode a dangerous way
 One night of winds beneath a moon-mad sky,
 Reckless as flame that leaps to cleave and burn,
 A wild, glad lover speeding to obey
 That mocking fate which bade him kiss and die!

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

THE ORDEAL BY FIRE

By Alice MacGowan

“**W**HAT—are you doing?”
Fernald’s hand faltered a bit, and he turned a dubious glance over his shoulder toward the woman who asked her question so sharply.

“Why, Kitty, I didn’t look for you for half an hour yet. I—I just stopped to burn—to burn some waste——”

The eyes of both went to the water’s surface below Fernald’s bending figure, where the thin scum of crude-oil was lazily igniting little blue-green spirals of flame rising up here and there, sending forth small dark curls of evil-smelling vapor.

Kitty’s eyes swept the face of the lake, then went to that of the man before her. Fernald had risen. His air of quiet unconcern was returning to him. With a half-smile he reached an arm to put about her. But she thrust him back nervously, catching his sleeve, holding and shaking it in her quick, characteristic fashion.

“Waste! You’re not—it isn’t—Gene, you’re firing the little lake—you’re firing it! It’ll run down through the Arm into the big water-hole, and and—and on into Jack Rabbit Lake! It—they—why, Gene, the whole——”

“See here, Kitty; listen to me, dearest.” Fernald caught the light little figure in his arms, and, with his slender hand under her chin, talked swiftly into the small, excited face, whose great eyes devoured him while he spoke.

“Suppose it does do just what you say, darling; suppose it does run down there and burn off all the waste? Don’t you see that’s the only thing that will give us a chance to get away safely? There’s the railroad and the station,”

nodding backward with his graceful head; “over yonder’s the house, the works—and Jack and the rest of them. We’ve got to get to that station, get the three o’clock train and away, and do it without meeting any of our folks. Wait—hold on—let me finish; I knew you didn’t more than half intend to go with me. Maybe that’s why I fired this stuff.” And again the graceful, high-borne head nodded, this time toward the creeping, ill-smelling fire. “You’ve got to go now, Kitty. In ten minutes’ time there’ll be a wall of fire between us and everything on the other side. Hold on!”—as the girl in his arms stirred rebelliously and her lips opened to speak—“I’ve got one more card.” He grasped her more strongly. “I couldn’t trust you, though I know you love me—me—me, not that fool, Jack Benton—so I’ve sent a small bit of a letter to my lord husband—‘telling all,’ you know. It’s to be given to him—across there in the dell—any time after three o’clock.”

“You—you——” she breathed, and drew back with angry repulsion.

The soft, black eyes watching her brightened a little.

“Well, you show me that I was wise. Now I see you didn’t so much as half intend to go with me. However, it is,” and the handsome, sinister face softened upon her, “it is settled now. There’s no going back.” With a furtive action he glanced at his watch. “It’s after two, Kitty. We haven’t much more than time to get to the station, get the—er—get what I need there and make that train.”

“They—the train? The three o’clock train? But—why—where’s

Bunt? Where are my children?" Her eyes flashed rapidly over him, then went back along the trail by which he should have come. Her face changed, darkened, sharpened, as Fernald stood watching her, and she cried out once more, "The babies—where are they, I say? Did I ever promise to go with you and leave my children?"

Fernald's patience was giving way; it was now touch and go with Kitty; he must make the bold stroke to win or lose. He spoke in a quiet, crisp voice, that commanded the distraught woman's attention.

"Kitty, there's no use raving. We've got to go now—and we've got to go alone. We could never have taken two children with us and run clean across the United States. Jack would have followed us—you know he would as long as he had a dollar or a drop of blood in his veins. I knew it—it was going to—to go hard with you, dear"—his smooth, musical voice dwelt gently upon the words; he drew a little nearer to the shrinking, stunned woman—"and I've cut the thing off with a clean stroke." He possessed himself of the two little cold hands. His arm closed quietly around Kitty. "It's a kindly cautery, little sweetheart. It will sting—but it will—"

The eyes looking up into his widened with terror; the small face grew whiter and whiter.

"Well—what—what—what?" she demanded in a curious, strangled whisper.

"The letter—I—I told him the whole thing in it; and gave it to—take it sensibly, bravely, darling—to Bunt. She thinks it's a joke. She's going over to the dell to hand it to him after—"

As though the cautery of which Fernald spoke had indeed been laid upon her naked flesh, the girl leaped free of his detaining arms with one wild, convulsive movement. It seemed almost that her whole body dilated as it burst from his hold. She said no word at first, but, standing apart from him, flung herself about on one heel, a complete revolution, so that her glance swept the whole scene about her. In

the same instant her mind appeared to take in the entire situation—all that had gone before; all that had been intended; to show her clearly where her feet stood at this moment.

"You are a devil—oh, a fiend!" she whispered. "How could I ever—oh—oh! Don't touch me—don't touch me!" as Fernald made a fierce stride toward her, with outstretched arms and ardent eyes. "Go with you? I? Oh," she shivered, "I could kill you, I loathe you so!"

She ran quickly, but with stumbling steps, toward her pony. With an unconscious oath, Fernald sprang between. The girl's eyes were desperate. In her heart was the thought of that letter. She was trapped; one moment had made of all her weak folly, terrible crime; had thrust her down toward the path to perdition, and was rearing a wall of fire between her and everything her heart held dear. With incredible quickness she sprang to one side. As Fernald, startled, turned also, it brought him below her on the slope, between her and the water, with its surface of blue-green, curling little flame-tongues; and she flung out both hands and thrust at him with all her might.

Taken by surprise, Fernald staggered, stumbled, fell; and as he rolled toward the water, whose surface his own hand had fired, struggling silently, Kate, with never a glance in his direction, ran like a deer to her pony, put her foot in the stirrup, leaped to Chiquite's back, and with a great sob choking in her throat, caught up the bridle-rein.

"God send I may be in time," the dry lips whispered. "O God—not that—not the letter—from Bunt's hand; my own brave, honest, loving little Bunt; to give her daddy a thing—"

Her voice failed. She looked at the gathering flame on the water's surface and shuddered. "Fiend!" she cried.

About two years before this time Jack Benton, ex-cow-puncher, cattle-man in a small way, a typical, open-

hearted, straightforward, level-headed plainsman, having become interested in oil, had himself prospected for and located what turned out to be a paying well. At first he worked along in a small way, using only such capital as he had of his own, and getting some primitive machinery in place. A year after the original discovery, James Fernald, an Eastern man, had capitalized the undertaking at Benton's Wells, upon condition that his scapegrace son be taken in as partner.

Then to the little home under the brow of Wild Horse Cliff came Eugene Fernald, bringing his remarkable gifts of personal beauty, perfect breeding, and fine abilities as mining engineer and expert; and back of all these, a spirit which was fire and sword and poison to the rest of mankind. From the time he had broken the hearts of his attendants in the nursery, standing by smiling innocently while they went sobbing—or cursing, as their nature might be—from the house, under some strange, shameful charge—from this time on up through the years at Harvard, where more than one fellow-student, and more than one poor nameless girl, had suffered secretly for his sins—Eugene had been a scourge to those nearest him; a thorn in his father's flesh; a burden so great—an apprehension so intolerable—to his mother, that she fled from it into the security of the grave.

To fine natural gifts Fernald had added ample study—since the vigorous mind did love to exercise itself; he brought to this new work a degree of interest, and had soon improved things much about the Wells. The capital put in by his father was used to admirable advantage; and Jack—keen, earnest, open-hearted Jack—approved and liked him unreservedly.

There was one problem that troubled the Benton's Wells people. The tank which they had cemented for the holding of the crude-oil evidently leaked somewhere, for a quantity of the petroleum escaped, at some unseen point, flowed down a small run and onto the face of the little lake where

Kitty and Fernald had met today. This lake connected by a long arm with a larger water-hole, and then, through another arm, entered a series of irregular-shaped lakes. Even Fernald's skill had failed to locate the leak. The oil had been running out in large quantities of late. The cattlemen who depended upon the lakes to water their cattle were growing uneasy and indignant.

Meantime, Gene Fernald's interest in the work had run its quick course, and commenced to flag—his was the nature which barely turns the first page of any enterprise. Those handsome, evil eyes of his began to look about for something easier. And there was Kitty—Kitty, young, pretty, very sweet, an adoring little wife and mother. But he who walks up and down in the world like a roaring lion had it that, just at this point in Fernald's course of destruction, Kitty should, for the first time in her healthy, happy, useful life, be pouting at fate, sulking at her big, unconscious, hard-working husband. She laid it up against him, that he had promised when they got the new machinery in, and the well to paying so much a day, they would all sail away for Europe, on their long delayed honeymoon, they and the babies. Kitty had longed to enter upon that career of spending, for which her years of saving and economizing had made her so eager. What was the use of being young and pretty, of having tastes; and what was the use of the money—if one had to be shut away from all the world, with its opportunities, its pleasures and its interests?

And to this sickness of the soul, this mean, disloyal, carping humor, the Law—the inexorable, infallible Law—sent the punishment of Eugene Fernald, beautiful, soft-voiced, soft-handed, quick-witted, prompt to see, to respond, as prompt and graceful to adjust, full of ripened, cultivated charm; Eugene, who seemed to Kitty's twisted mood to bring her the understanding and tender appreciation which her life lacked. Now, as she

rode hard along beside that low hedge of iridescent fire, which grew every moment taller, she leaned down groaning in her saddle and said to herself that she had never meant to leave her husband, her home, all that was right and good in her life, and go with Fernald, where and to what she knew not.

She told herself this. And yet—and yet—the garments she had on were not her usual rough riding-dress, but a costume in which a lady might—in case of emergency—travel across the continent; hat, gloves, boots—all were other than those she commonly wore in her rides about the rough country; while at her belt an unaccustomed chatelaine bag hung. Shame withered her at the thought. She sent her spurred heel hard into Chiquite's flank, urging him with voice and gesture.

Behind her a little breeze sprang up, came racing down after fleeing horse and rider; and the flames, the green and blue and golden flames, with their thick, dark, evil-smelling reek, prospered in its breath. They multiplied, they spread; they hugged themselves; then, as the breeze veered and whirled, they twisted in gigantic, grotesque spirals. The sound of them swelled from a little murmur into a drumming, intermittent roar.

Bending low in her saddle; spurring, crying to Chiquite; lashing his sides with the long ends of the bridle-reins; dashing the loose and streaming hair from her face; looking back fearfully over her shoulder, only to spur and lash and cry out again; Chiquite's little hoofs crashing loud upon the rocky way, casting up loose stones to right and left; stumbling, almost falling once or twice, Kate won at last to the second lake, the big water-hole, the flames roaring hard behind. She skirted it, straining every nerve to reach the narrow Neck beyond far enough in advance of the fire to be able to ford it. For in the dell upon the other side, hemmed by Wild Horse Cliffs at the back, and the margins of Cattle Lake, Second Arm and Jack

Rabbit Lake, under the big cottonwoods, by Saddle Rock, she would find Jack and the children. And if she reached them in time they all might escape through the further pass between the Cliffs and the edge of Jack Rabbit Lake. And oh, if God would be good to her, she might get there before Bunt's little, innocent sunburned hand had dealt her father that villain's blow!

Breathing short through lips and throat dry-parched, she came, well ahead of the flames, to the place where the big water-hole narrowed down into the Neck. She swung Chiquite in at a right-angle to her course, and straight across the path of the oncoming fire; she raked his side with the spur, crying upon him to take the ford. But the brave little cow-pony refused the call. Frenzy came upon her. To lose all, here, almost within sight of the goal, and after she had done so much! She tore the hat from her head, and, spurring hard, brought it down with all the strength of her arm, first upon his quarter, then on neck, shoulder and head. The long hat-pins hanging at the headgear were driven in with every blow; the felt flopped noisily upon the pony's side; the spur drew blood with each frenzied dig of Kitty's heel; her wild voice shrieked in his ears. Throwing up his head, snorting with terror and pain, the little chap plunged in.

But would they ever win across? It seemed not. The breeze blew strong toward her, the flames were growing taller: rising a little way from the water's surface, they leaned for all the rest of their length, slantingly downstream. The girl, crouching upon her pony's neck, turned her face toward them, where they reached their long, rainbow-hued, wavering tongues at her, writhing, twisting, licking, roaring hideously; and the stench that came down upon her, and the reeking, fat, black smoke were almost more horrible than the savage fire.

Chiquite would more than once have bolted; but Kate beat fiercely upon the left side of his neck and head with that loud-flapping hat and its stinging long pins. Gigantic rags of red, living

blaze began to tear loose and fling far toward her. A new sound was in her ears, a noise as of a vast world-lamp, turned down and sputtering to its death. The flames shook and vibrated to this sound. Scores and hundreds of the lolling, straining tongues broke off in midair, and with that appalling, magnified "plop!" hurled themselves at the ford, far ahead of the fire itself. Soot, smoke and grime were thick upon horse and rider; tiny bits of flame had lodged in more than one spot, in mane, tail and flying hair and draperies; but Kate snatched them out, one after the other, while never ceasing to spur, to beat with the hat, and to cheer on the terrified horse.

At last the small flying hoofs struck the dry earth of the farther shore! With a rush the pony leaped out of the terrible passage; with a rush he took the rise beyond. The fire was coming fast. If she would save the husband and children sitting unconscious at play under the cottonwoods, in the dip over yonder, she must lose no moment; and she pushed Chiquite ahead with undiminished fury.

Jack Benton, lying at full-length on the pleasant grass, baby Kate astride his chest riding him for a bucking-bronco, looked up and saw Bunt, his seven-year-old daughter, approaching on her pony through the Further Pass. He raised his head, sniffing suspiciously at the breeze, and was in the act of lifting off his infant rider, his face marked with startled anxiety, when a tremendous clatter sounded down the other trail, the one through the near pass. Bunt loped toward him gaily. Lugging something that looked like a letter out of her little blouse, she waved it above her head; but on the instant the baby cried out in terror to something approaching down the home trail.

This ugly caricature of a horse—was it?—no, surely—yes, it was Chiquite, his buckskin coat blackened in streaks and patches, his mane and tail scorched and half gone, and on him a wild, terrible figure, a woman whose fair, streaming hair was also scorched and par-

tially burned away, while what was left fell about face and neck, darkened with soot and grime. The delicate little face was soot-blackened beyond recognition; and out of it the great gray eyes, ringed about with the dubious white her tears had washed, blazed wildly. As she came at a headlong pace, she screamed at them unintelligible words.

Man and children were frozen at the sight. It was Kitty, her husband knew; it could be none other; but beyond that one fact his dazed mind could not go. As the heaving, panting pony came up to them, he thrust the little ones back, and leaped to the oncoming horse's head. His powerful hand upon the bit checked the pony so abruptly that his rider must have fallen had not Jack's arm caught her. The world swam darkly before Kitty's swooning vision; but she must not faint now. She set her teeth hard, and clutched Jack's arm with both hands.

"The oil's afire—all the way down—from the Little Run—clear to—to the Second Arm! The wind's bringing it straight down. I rode—we—the Further Pass! Quick! It's our only chance. We'll be hemmed in here——"

Jack had spoken no word to interrupt her. With lightning movements he set her back upon Chiquite, and put the bridle once more into her hands. A glance at Bunt told him that the child had heard, and understood.

"Ride on out, quick, daddy's brave girl. Ride all you know," he said, pointing up the further trail.

And as the little girl—after just one wistful look at father and mother and baby sister—wheeled into the trail at a full run he threw blanket and saddle upon his own horse, drew up the cinch, tossed the baby into the saddle where she sat astride, her little hands grasping the horn tightly, then sprang in behind her, swung into the trail after Chiquite, and his powerful voice drove the tired pony ahead like a lash.

The long flames were licking around the shoulder of the cliffs when the little family reached the Further Pass. Bunt's childish face whitened pitifully.

She turned it back appealingly over her shoulder.

"Ride, ride, ride, Bunty! It's life or death, little daughter. Give him the spur and the quirt. Let him have it hard!" he shouted to the child, then spurred his own larger horse; and as the flames roared down the Second Arm and ran licking out in fiery streamers, breaking off in midair, and flinging themselves at the Pass with those loud, horrifying "plop! plop! plops!" like the guttering of a titanic lamp the three horses shrinking, turning terrified eyes aside, trembling and snorting, but driven on by that strong voice from the rear, finally emerged, one by one, upon the free open space beyond the Pass.

Safe on the height above the dell, Jack halted his little band. From here they could see all that had happened. The upper lake, a spot of solid flame; the wall of fire stretching from it to the big water-hole; then another wall of flame growing, as they looked at it, on downward to Jack Rabbit Lake. The dell below them, where only a few minutes ago Kitty had found her treasures safe, was a hell of raging, roaring flames, sucked in there by the wind's action.

Jack had his wife off her horse, and laid tenderly on the soft, sweet grass; he lifted her head and shoulders, and held her in his arms, looking at her with loving eyes, from which the tears ran down, saying no word, only kissing her poor scorched forehead, her grimed cheek, her little, bruised, blackened hands. The baby crowded in mutely to her mother's side, hiding her eyes against Kate's dress to shut away the strange, darkened face that frightened her. Bunt, with her father's hat, was gone at a gallop for water.

Jack's silence—even his tears of love and pity—told Kate nothing of that most terrible thing—the letter. She searched his face again, but found no answer to the question there, and struggled to rise.

"Poor darling! Poor little girl," she thought she heard him say, as once more the world dimmed before her

eyes; and when she opened them again it was with the feeling of sweet, clean, cold water upon her face and hands; and kisses too, and the broken murmur of tender voices in her ear. They were bathing her face and hands as best they could, the father and child, crying over her together.

Abruptly Jack dropped the hand he held and cried out, "Fernald! My God, where is he? He was to have——"

Kate's gaze was fastened, helpless, upon her husband. But Bunt broke in: "Oh, daddy! I forgot—the letter. Here it is," and the grimy little paw fumbled in her blouse and brought out a crumpled sheet. Apparently, the thing had been given to her without any envelope, and it was now unfolded.

The child's mother watched every motion with fascinated eyes, as one who sees in a dream his doom approaching, and cannot cry out nor move. The sheet fluttered open, so that she saw the few lines of bold writing upon it. The heart of Jack Benton's wife gave one mighty contraction, and seemed to stop beating. Then Jack's fingers stretched mechanically toward the letter, and Kitty unconsciously groaned, like an anesthetized patient under the surgeon's scalpel.

The man's fingers relaxed; he turned instantly toward his wife. She was respite for a few seconds. Bunt had released the paper, too, and knelt beside her mother. A deadly nausea locked Kitty's senses; but she could not faint while that letter lay open there. And now, even as her eyes were filming to half-consciousness, a hot wind took it, sucked it aloft, shook and brandished it as though threatening her with its revelations, carried it over the hill, held it suspended there while one might draw a long breath, then dropped it down into the flames below.

She had saved her soul alive—except for Fernald. If Jack must know, she would be allowed to tell him in her own fashion, and with her own explanation. She was in his arms now, their children clinging to both of them, and a fierce resolution took her to fight for her once

lightly prized position of wife and mother—a position which she vowed to God and her own soul should henceforth be held above any hint of stain.

As she sat up and announced herself fit for the home journey, Jack began anxiously: "I'd be glad if you could come, Kitty—or I'll leave you and the children here, and ride on—I'm desperately uneasy about Fernald."

Ride on—to meet Fernald—without her—would he? White and shaking, Kitty struggled to her feet.

"I can go with you now," she half whispered. Then with a big effort, "Don't worry about Mr. Fernald. He knew. He fired the lakes—burning waste."

Jack turned and looked at his wife curiously.

"He did," she repeated. "I—I passed him at the water-hole, and he told me that was what he was doing."

She saw from her husband's face that the deed she described was evident to him as one of evil intention. Plainly, he knew that Fernald could not have fired the waters accidentally. She clung to his coat lapels and gazed up into his grave face. "It'll ruin us, won't it, Jack?"

Bunt and the baby clung, gazing, too.

"No," answered Jack quietly. "I've been keeping it as a surprise for you till we could bring the money over and show it to you. We've sold out to that Massachusetts company, and the price is at the station waiting for me or Gene to go and get it."

"At — the — station!" Kitty repeated after him, with pale lips. She knew now that Fernald had intended to rob his partner of wife, honor and fortune at one blow. A glance into her husband's face, as pale as her own, helped her quick guess that he suspected Fernald had fired the oil with the intention of decamping with the money.

"Never mind," she begged. "Let him go. If he's robbed you, let him go. We'll be so happy—together—together, you and me and the babies—with love and trust, and hope—work-

ing for another stake. Let him go, Jack."

Her husband looked at her with a half-smile. Was this the woman who had been so impatient to taste the joys of wealth and travel and leisure? He was conscious of something new and more lovable in his wife.

"We won't give up our share of the money without a fight for it," he said, as he went to the cliff's edge to bring up their straying ponies. "I don't want to think any harm of Gene till I have to; but he sha'n't rob you and the babies."

He stopped as if shot, looking down into the roaring hell below, its red light dancing upon his tanned, serious face. Kitty ran toward him, both little ones following.

"Keep back!" he shouted to them, flinging up a hand.

The children, more trained to obedience, halted; Kitty kept straight on. She guessed that what Jack saw had to do with Fernald. She dreaded, with an agony of apprehension, that the man himself was yet to be reckoned with in her life; that he would take, in some hideous fashion, his revenge for her defection.

What she saw, as she clung shaking to her husband's arm, was Gene Fernald on his big pony, Blackamoor. He had evidently crossed over on foot above the house, back at Little Run, had there saddled Blackamoor, and come down the short way. Now he was hemmed in above the first pass into the dell. Plainly he did not know that the dell itself, beyond that pass, was a valley of death. He chose to go forward, rather than back.

Benton made a trumpet of his palms and shouted, "Back! Back for your life—Gene!"

The man below looked up and saw them; Kitty hanging like a rag against the tall, strong form of her husband, her fair head buried upon his breast to shut out the sight of the other's hateful beauty.

Fernald was never a man to take advice. He glanced back, and no doubt thought it impossible to turn;

questioned the forward path, which Jack Benton had forbidden him, sat quietly upon his horse for a moment, then suddenly lifted his face once more. He wore a strange, unreadable smile; and the firelight playing upon his darkly beautiful countenance, seemed to touch it with something wild and devilish. His whole figure looked elate, gallant, gay, infinitely daring, as, raising his hand with a gesture of deathless grace and elegance, he waved lightly to them, and put his horse to the Pass. And they saw him no more.

Benton lifted his fainting wife tenderly back from the brink. "He was coming to warn us—poor old Gene," the generous soul grieved; and Kitty had not the heart to contradict this kindly interpretation of Fernald's last action.

Was he, indeed? Or was he riding down to make that unspeakable scene which poor Kitty had dreaded as one might dread a lash? She was never to know. And, that she might spare his memory, she was never to tell her husband why his partner fired the waste at Benton's Wells.



THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

OH, the pitiless walls rise hard and fast
 Round the Land of Heart's Desire!
 And the weariful days drag slowly past
 Outside in the sun's hot fire.

No gold have we, we countless host,
 To bribe the Gatekeeper grim,
 However the flowers in there may blow
 Or the trees rise straight and slim!

But we, who toil in the dust out here,
 With Want and Care as mates,
 Have yet one hope which redeems the day—
 We know that the Loved Land waits.

We know! And the Knowledge is passing fair,
 For hark, when the soft moon gleams
 We shall scale those pitiless iron walls
 By the marvelous Ladder of Dreams!

CLINTON DANGERFIELD.



FAR WORSE

"DICK has a bad habit of talking in his sleep."
 "Yes, but he has one worse habit."
 "What's that?"
 "His talking when he's awake."

ASPECTS OF VERLAINE

By Arthur Symons

WHAT Verlaine gave to French poetry was a new capacity for singing. Of properly lyric verse there had never been any lack, but, even in Hugo, lyric verse retains something formal, some trace of rhetoric, never quite reaching that ecstasy, as of an "unbodied voice," which we find in the best English songs—in Blake, Coleridge, Shelley and the Elizabethans.

It was partly from his study of English poetry that Verlaine learned this new secret song. He often spoke to me of Tennyson, and told me that he had once thought of translating "In Memoriam" into French. I do not know how much he had read the greater lyric poets whom I have named, but there is enough in Tennyson for a foreigner, acutely sensitive to the forms and cadences of another language, to learn perhaps all that those greater poets could have taught him. Tennyson formulates, almost into principles, what had been more or less of an accidental, indeed, a scarcely realized, discovery with all the others except Coleridge; and even Coleridge, though he knew his magic by heart, could not repeat his evocations at will. And a poet of genius learns more, I think, from models which are not the very greatest than from those which are. Swinburne, for instance, who has studied everything to his purpose in all literature, could have done without Shakespeare and Shelley better than without some half-dozen passages in Crashaw and in Donne. All that is needed to set one's own fire ablaze is a single spark from a hearth, not the whole blast of a furnace.

And I can well imagine that the verse of Poe may have had its influence on Verlaine, though I do not remember hearing him speak of it in the original, but in Mallarmé's marvelous translation in prose. He must almost certainly have read it in English, but, even in that translation, with its cunning transportation of cadences and refrains, there might have been found some of the suggestion of a new technique in verse. Poe had been one of the main influences upon the great poet who came immediately before Verlaine, Baudelaire, but it was in his prose chiefly, that prose which gained, I really think, in passing into the French of Baudelaire.

I remember that on my saying this once to Walter Pater, he told me that he had read Poe's stories first in the French translation, and that, on coming later to read them in English, he had been disappointed. This sort of finish Baudelaire could well put upon the prose of Poe, but in his verse there was some incalculable element which never enters into Baudelaire's own verse, and so it was left for Mallarmé to translate the poems, and for Verlaine, as I think, to profit by them. I think it must have been from Poe that he learned the trick of some of those repetitions of words in a line, or of the same word at the end of two lines, which he came to use with less apparent artifice, and thus, I think, with a more satisfying effect on the ear. The other of the two great American poets, Walt Whitman, may also have shown him—for he knew and admired Whitman—the degree to which it was possible to follow his own counsel, "*L'Art, mes*

enfants, c'est d'être absolument soi-même!" For it was the combination in him of two qualities, each of which existed separately, and supremely, in those two American poets, the quality of almost inarticulate music in song and the quality of childlike straightforwardness in speech, that made Verlaine the new, vital and exquisite poet that he was.

I think that in Verlaine's soul there was never any conscious distinction between reality and imagination, between what to most people is the prose and the poetry of actual existence. His whole nature, otherwise perhaps useless enough, was always waiting to turn into poetry. No such temperament has been seen since Villon, and not in the least because, both in Villon and in Verlaine there were picturesque vices to attract attention, and because both fell in with the scum and lees of society. What in Verlaine became soiled with evil might, under other chances and influences, have made part of the beauty of a Saint Francis. He had an inconceivable simplicity of nature, and those profound instincts which are really the instincts of the gentleman. When he stayed with me in London he was the most delightful of guests, and, in Paris, whenever he was not actually under the influence of those drinks which were offered to him all day long by the people who called themselves his friends, he was the most delightful of companions. His queer, rambling, confidential talk, full of wonder, trouble and gaiety, was always on the verge of poetry, which in him was hardly more than the choice and condensation of a mood or a moment. All his verse is a confession of what was beautiful and dreadful and merely troublesome to him in life, at first under courtly disguises, and then, gradually, with more and more sincerity to fact as well as to emotion or sensation, and, at the end, in a pitiful enough way, a sort of nakedness in rags.

In his first period he is Watteau, and sings "*Fêtes Galantes*," as the other painted them: with an exquisite art of surfaces, always about to sink

through into melancholy, but never quite doing so, or never beyond the bounds of pleasantness. He is Louis-Quinze, but with a personal trouble somewhere, as a last delicacy. He sets his puppets sighing in a Versailles of dreams, writes letters for them full of sensibility, notes their attitudes with a sympathetic mockery, and gives us the whole gallant delirium of Marquis, Abbé, Shepherdess and the Sentimentalists. He revives for us the whole masquerade of the Italian Comedy of Masks, Pierrot, Columbine and Scaramouche; and, through the sound of violins and the network of the dancing,

Columbine dreams, and starts to find
A sad heart sighing in the wind,
And in her heart a voice that sighs.

He shows us, with an ironical gesture like Watteau's, the faun, Coleridge's "sly satyr peeping through the leaves" at the end of the alley.

THE FAUN

An aged faun of old red clay
Laughs from the grassy bowling-green,
Foretelling doubtless some decay
Of mortal moments so serene

That lead us lightly on our way
(Love's piteous pilgrims have we been!)
To this last hour that runs away
Dancing to the tambourine.

And it is a Fragonard, perhaps, rather than a Watteau, which we find in this babble of tongues and bubble as of the froth on champagne.

ON THE GRASS

The Abbé wanders. —Marquis, now
Set straight your periwig, and speak!
—This Cyprus wine is heavenly, how
Much less, Camargo, than your cheek!

—My goddess. . . . —Do, mi, sol, la, si.
—Abbé, such treason who'll forgive you?
—May I die, ladies, if there be
A star in heaven I will not give you!

—I'd be my lady's lapdog; then . . .
—Shepherdess, kiss your shepherd soon,
Shepherd, come kiss. . . . —Well,
gentlemen?
—Do, mi, sol. —Hey, good night, good
Moon!

Then we return to Watteau, and in this "Promenade" there are all Wat-

teau's silken colors and spring air, with his pathetic half-smile, which seems to add pity to his sympathy with the world of pleasure, so unconscious in its gaiety, so passionately in love with the moment as it flies.

The sky so pale, and the trees, such frail things,
Seem as if smiling on our bright array
That flits so light and gay upon the way
With indolent airs and fluttering as of wings.

The fountain wrinkles under a faint wind,
And all the sifted sunlight falling through
The lime-trees of the shadowy avenue
Comes to us blue and shadowy-pale and thinned.

Faultlessly fickle, and yet fond enough,
With fond hearts not too tender to be free,
We wander whispering deliciously,
And every lover leads a lady-love,

Whose imperceptible and roguish hand
Darts now and then a dainty tap, the lip
Revenge on an extreme finger-tip,
The tip of the left little finger, and,

The deed being so excessive and uncouth,
A duly freezing look deals punishment,
That in the instant of the act is blent
With a shy pity pouting in the mouth.

Then we hear music, "the food of love," playing "*en sourdine*," and to the deceiving calmness of this measure:

ON MUTED STRINGS

Calm where twilight leaves have stilled
With their shadow light and sound,
Let our silent love be filled
With a silence as profound.

Let our ravished senses blend,
Heart and spirit, thine and mine,
With vague languors that descend
From the branches of the pine.

Close thine eyes against the day,
Fold thine arms across thy breast,
And for ever turn away
All desire of all but rest.

Let the lulling breaths that pass
In soft wrinkles at thy feet,
Tossing all the tawny grass,
This and only this repeat.

And when solemn evening
Dims the forest's dusky air,
Then the nightingale shall sing
The delight of our despair.

The whole pageant ends with a "*Colloque Sentimental*," whispered be-

tween sighs in an old park by two lovers who are no more than two ghosts of themselves:

In the old park, solitary and vast,
Over the frozen ground two forms once passed.

Their lips were languid and their eyes were dead,
And hardly could be heard the words they said.

In the old park, solitary and vast,
Two ghosts once met to summon up the past.

—Do you remember our old ecstasy?
—Why would you bring it back again to me?

—Do you still dream as you dreamed long ago?
Does your heart beat to my heart's beating?
—No.

—Ah, those old days, what joys have those days seen
When your lips met my lips! —It may have been.

—How blue the sky was, and our hope how light!
—Hope has flown helpless back into the night.

They walked through weeds withered and grasses dead,
And only the night heard the words they said.

This chill ending leads us naturally to the "*Romances sans Paroles*," which are acutely personal and have lost no magic. They are summed up, I think, in that perfect song, "*Il pleure dans mon cœur*," which I have tried to translate, but which I will not repeat here, as it is to be found at the end of the first volume of my collected poems, together with eight translations from the "*Fêtes Galantes*." In this song Verlaine has found words and a tune for the whole modern disillusionment, which is not a weariness of the world, like Senancourt's, nor a philosophical pessimism, like Leopardi's, nor a revolt against anything human or divine, but mere meaningless discontent, the incurable discontent of those who do not know why they are discontented.

Not so very long after the poems of this book come the poems written in

prison, one of which, "False Impression," I translated in *Harper's Magazine*. Here, words go as far as words can go to become the symbols of color and of atmosphere and of sensation. It is such poems as these which are really almost scientific in their accuracy to what they attempt to render that have led critics not only like Nordau, a journalist with a thesis, but like Tolstoi, a man of genius with a theory, to set down Verlaine among "mattoids" and among "decadents."

Then comes what is perhaps the great period, the period of "Sagesse," when prison and solitude and reflection have done their work and Verlaine has become a voice for the soul's confession to God of the humility of its helplessness, and a voice for the praise of the divine beauty. No one has ever spoken for the body with more simplicity or with a more penetrating humanity than Verlaine in this sonnet:

The body's sadness and the languor thereof
Melt and bow me with pity till I could weep.
Ah! when the dark hours break it down in
sleep

And the bedclothes score the skin and the
hot hands move;

Alert for a little with the fever of day,
Damp still with the heavy sweat of the night
that has thinned,

Like a bird that trembles on a roof in the
wind;

And the feet that are sorrowful because
of the way,

And the breast that a hand has scarred with
a double blow,

And the mouth that as an open wound is red,
And the flesh that shivers and is a painted
show,

And the eyes, poor eyes so lovely with tears
unshed

For the sorrow of seeing this also over and
done:

Sad body, how weak and how punished
under the sun!

In another poem of "Sagesse" we have a more feverish, a more fantastic transposition of sensation and the mind's coloring of it:

The little hands that once were mine,
The hands I loved, the lovely hands,
After the roadways and the strands,
And realms and kingdoms once divine,

And mortal loss of all that seems
Lost with the old sad pagan things,
Royal as in the days of kings,
The dear hands open to me dreams.

Hands of dream, hands of holy flame
Upon my soul in blessing laid,
What is it that these hands have said
That my soul hears and swoons to them?

Is it a phantom, this pure sight
Of mother's love made tenderer,
Of spirit with spirit linked to share
The mutual kinship of delight?

Good sorrow, dear remorse, and ye,
Blest dreams, O hands ordained of
heaven

To tell me if I am forgiven,
Make but the sign that pardons me!

And here is that first child's simplicity, which is now half a prayer as well as all a song:

Fairer is the sea
Than the minster high,
Faithful nurse is she,
And last lullaby,
And the Virgin prays
Over the sea's ways.

Gifts of grief and guerdons
From her bounty come,
And I hear her pardons
Chide her angers home;
Nothing in her is
Unforgivingness.

She is piteous,
She the perilous!
Friendly things to us
The wave sings to us:
"You whose hope is past,
Here is peace at last."

And beneath the skies,
Brighter hued than they,
She has azure dyes,
Rose and green and gray.
Better is the sea
Than all fair things or we.

After "Sagesse" come many books, in which we see, as in a drama acted before us, a kind of frank miracle-play of the Middle Ages, the whole conflict of the flesh and the spirit, in which a losing battle seems never to be quite lost. In one of the latest books, the "Epigrammes" of 1894, we find, among much work of another sort, this beautiful poem, which I should like to take as the last word of that conflict:

When we go together, if I may see her again,
Into the dark wood and the rain;

When we are drunken with air and the sun's delight At the brink of the river of light;	And, if the slow good-will of the world still seem To cradle us in a dream;
When we are homeless at last, for a moment's space, Without city or abiding-place;	Then, let us sleep the last sleep with no leave-taking, And God will see to the waking.



FORGIVEN

AS I strayed through the wood in the withering day
 And the moon wore a veil of gray,
 I listened to the song that the twilight weaves—
 The dim, low strain of the quivering leaves
 That only the wind can repeat;
 And in the half-night, with its weird, weird light,
 I felt my heart a-beat.
 For it seemed, in that lone place,
 That my fair first Love was nigh;
 In the shivering dusk, with its breath of musk,
 I could almost hear her sigh.

As I strayed through the wood in the blossoming night
 And the moon waxed shyly bright,
 By her wan, sweet luster it seemed to me
 That my old Love's face I could verily see;
 And I longed—how I longed—to be shriven!
 "O Sweetheart, speak! But a word I seek—
 To know that the dead hath forgiven!"
 Then it seemed, in that lone place,
 While mine eyes with tears were blurred,
 Down the woodland aisle I saw her smile;
 And I knew that my prayer was heard.

SAMUEL MINTURN PECK.



FROM THE COZY CORNER

SHE—Am I the first girl you ever kissed?
 HE—Why, do I go about it like an amateur?



"Is he a friend of yours?"
 "No; I'm a friend of his."

A PREDICAMENT

O H, women are the strangest things
 There are beneath the sun;
 Although I know that very well—
 I mean to marry one!

But which one is the question, for
 I don't know what to do;
 Although I mean to marry one—
 I am engaged to two!

The situation surely is
 As trying as can be;
 Although I am engaged to two—
 I am in love with three!

And then there is another fact
 That troubles me still more:
 Although I am in love with three—
 I am beloved by four!

HAROLD SUSMAN.



THE PATRIOT

HE sat with his friend in his smoking-room. The furnishings were largely Old Dutch. Works of Italian and Spanish masters decked the walls. He took a Turkish cigarette from a Russian leather case and, lighting it with a Norwegian vesta, offered his friend a Cuban cigar. Brushing the cigarette ash from his English-tweed trousers, he settled back in a bamboo chair and serenely contemplated the Persian rug upon the floor and a Japanese screen by the French window. Presently he invited his friend to partake of a new German wine and to sample some recently imported Scotch whisky.

"Yes," he said after a pause, "I'm mighty proud of being an American, and I know there's no place like the good old U. S. A., and nothing like our own productions and institutions."



"I CAN'T wade through Meredith's last novel."
 "Of course not; it's too deep."

THE ADEQUATE EGERTON

By Roland Franklyn Andrews

WHEN Egerton and the girl foregathered in the town there followed always a period of polite but heartfelt hilarity. This was not remarkable, for Egerton and the girl had been spasmodically attempting to marry each other ever since they went to different boarding-schools in the same village. Unkind fate and the geography kept them from meeting more than once a year, and when they did come face to face on these rare occasions in the city the resulting mutual excitement generated dynamics of power.

Egerton served as sub-editor of a newspaper in a New England manufacturing town. He earned one hundred dollars every month. By the code of Egerton, whose viewpoint was worldly, you could not marry a really nice girl on resources so extremely limited. Therefore, he dreamed dreams, accomplished much potent suffering, and saw the girl only once in a twelvemonth.

The girl, who sympathetically shared Egerton's material point of view, lived in the Middle West, many expensive miles distant from Egerton's newspaper. Each spring she came to New York to visit her married sister. Then Egerton, with his dress clothes newly furbished, and the increment of much toil carefully folded within his alligator pocket-book, descended upon the metropolis, so jubilant that he disported himself with the financial disregard of a Croesus. There followed a period of delight richly blended with melancholy, at the end of which Egerton went back to his newspaper surcharged with manly determination,

and the girl left for the Middle West, thinking greatly on romance and millinery. On the letters, which for a month thereafter were posted daily from the office of the newspaper and the home in the Middle West, it is not necessary to dwell. They consisted largely of the ecstatic recapitulation of sundry conversations, predictions and exploits occurring during the invasion of the city and different principally in respect to their increased fervor from those ordinarily in passage between the two points.

Egerton and the girl were never very silly. They had been chastened by long waiting, they were baldly cognizant of a serious rift in the romantic lute, and they had arrived at a high state in which they found it quite possible to enjoy each other's excellent company even without the golden glamour of isolated sentiment. Besides there existed conditions which kept them much within the public gaze, and the public gaze is always healthily restraining. The married sister, although of sympathetic nature, was hopelessly ensnared of bridge. It was known that when evening fell she greatly desired the use of her own uptown apartment drawing-room. Also, despite the sweet aloofness of their relation, the early night sights and sounds of the glittering city possessed certain power of fascination for both of them, and therefore, since they were outlanders, and of that lack of acquaintance which renders chaperonage dispensable, they were wont to sally forth each evening before dinner without bitterness at their exile. Having sallied, they began by dining

elaborately in vast hotels, where they commanded strange foods in strange French. This they found particularly pleasing, since it brought a delicious sense of domestic intimacy, and because, being at heart but children and being in far countries warmed by the luxury and the richness and the soft music, there was always the opportunity to speculate excitedly on whether the people who stared from the next table were mistaking them for man and wife. From dinners they moved most naturally to theatres, where they were unwontedly amused by the antics of German comedians, or looked at each other expressively in the tense moments of historical romances, and afterward there was always the swift, smooth dash up the dim avenues in the electric hansom, when they could look fixedly ahead at the converging lines of street-lamps and remain silent. The program seldom varied, unless they elected to explore strange places in the lower town. It was highly banal, but they found it satisfying.

Perhaps it was because they were distressingly earthy, or perhaps it was because they had achieved a certain detachment of the spirit; anyway, it is certain that one evening before theatre time Egerton and the girl, in the midst of concrete creature comfort—fat waiters hurrying by with obviously material dinners, electric bulbs flashing in gaudily decorated ceilings, machine-like street ballads pouring down from the rococo gallery of the musicians—sat on either side of a table made expressly for purposes of eating and were content. Egerton had a very black cigar and enjoyed it. He was comfortably conscious that the girl had soft brown hair with friendly little waves about the temples, that her teeth were very white and even, and that every note of her voice sent warm little shivers coursing through him. But he also knew that the flavor of the cigar was excellent, and he was interested in the folk about him. The girl knew that she liked Egerton's good square jaw and the trim, taut

fashion in which his dress-coat sat about his broad shoulders, and she knew that she also liked the way in which he glanced at her with an air of protective proprietorship. But she did not resent the distraction of the many things about her.

For people known to be exclusively interested in each other, their talk was not orthodox.

"Cracky!" said Egerton, with apparent enthusiasm. "There's a ripping pretty girl just coming in. I hope they'll give her a good dinner."

The enthusiasm did not occasion the deserved reproof, but the girl turned a critical eye.

"William," she demanded, "how can you! She may have a pink-and-white face, but look at the way she walks. That girl positively waddles."

"Jealous!" jeered Egerton. "Just because she's so nice to look at you find fault with her movement. 'Tisn't the poor girl's fault, anyway. That's her bringing up."

"Bringing up?"

"Yes. Bad family training. They didn't teach her to insist upon grace before meat. She is pretty, though. Hello, is she bowing to me?"

"Silly! Of course not. She doesn't even see you. She's bowing to the interesting man back of me."

"Prosperous party with the side elevation like a Bartlett pear?"

"He is a little stout. Yes."

"What's so interesting about him, then? Nobody loves a fat man."

"What he's saying."

"Eavesdropper! What is he saying?"

"Oh, things about a big railroad. It's his, and it must be 'way out West somewhere or down in that Wall street place, because they're having trouble with the cattle. The bulls are up in the air, he says. What a funny way to describe it! But he's going to arrange it so they won't cause any damage. He's going to put it on the toboggan tomorrow and knock the bottom out. He means the railroad, doesn't he? Isn't he odd?"

"He's just a common every-day octopus," declared Egerton. "Watch

out for his tentacles, or he'll grab you. Come on. We're going to the theatre now. Waiter, get me a hansom." And without further thought of ungraceful girl, man or railroad, they went away.

There was a polite, slow-moving but insistent crowd in the cramped little lobby of the playhouse. Carriages rattling noisily to the curb deposited smoothly groomed men who guided women, who looked like plumed swans in their long, straight-lined white coats, toward the curtained aperture from which sprang the spirited music. There was the faint odor of violets, the frou-frou of rich garments, the subdued hum of talk, and the subtle intoxication of the great city at the start of its evening frolic. Egerton relished it keenly as, glancing backward at the girl near the wall, he wriggled his way to the tiny window of the box-office.

"Two seats? Haven't got 'em. House sold," said the man behind the window, staring vacantly at an invisible something just over Egerton's head.

"But we've got to see this," persisted Egerton. "Can't you——?"

"One box left," suggested the functionary, still gazing at the invisible something.

"Good," said Egerton, reaching for the larger bills in the alligator pocket-book. "That's probably a bit better than buying the theatre, anyway. It's rather grand to own a box, isn't it? This is my open season for grandeur. Give me the box."

He made his way back. "Come on, Miss Girl," he said. "With our usual luck and our impressive wealth, we've got a glittering box. We're in the first families now. I'm glad we don't live in New York, aren't you?"

"Why? Because it's so terribly expensive?"

"Because then there wouldn't be any New York to come to. They say this is a corking show."

It was a "corking show," of the kind dealing with mythical islands tempo-

rarily ruled by a bogus potentate, in reality a patent-medicine man in masquerade, and possessing a formidable-looking queen who descends from an Oriental throne to sing Sixth avenue negro songs whenever the activity seems in danger of lapsing. All through the first act the girl, sitting close to the rail, leaned forward delightedly when the big, vivid chorus came surging down to the footlights, and joined in the laughter at the patent-medicine man, as, prancing through the jungle of the mythical island, he shouted topical verses anent happenings to the unsophisticated upon Broadway. Egerton, so largely pleased at his surroundings that he had given the usher fifty cents for hanging his overcoat on a hook at the rear, was close behind her.

"I can't see any of the show," he explained cheerfully, during the second instalment. "You never can in a box. But I'm having the most beautiful view of that stray lock just back of your ear—no, don't move, please. I can see shows 'most any time. They have 'em at our op'ry house, up home. And I'm particularly pleased with my present outlook."

"Silly!" answered the girl. "They're going to sing the Baobab song now, and if you won't look at the stage, just see who's coming into the next box."

"Eh?" said Egerton. "What is it? Celebrity or gown?"

"It's the funny little man with the animal railroad."

Egerton leaned forward. "Oh, yes," he said. "The Bartlett Pear party and his friends. Patrons of art, you know. He'll guffaw at the clowns and talk shop through the solos and hum the choruses out of key in the lobby. He's a captain of industry."

"He's got a railroad, anyway," persisted the girl; "and he can do more things than make fun of people. He can make money, and it's just as clever to make money as it is to make epigrams. I'm so tired of waiting for you to begin."

"Huh!" retorted Egerton scornfully. "Listen to the Baobab Tree.

Old Bartlett Pear likes it. Those chaps have dined so extensively they'd like anything. Bartlett Pear is beginning to feel tired, though."

The men in the adjoining box, portly figures of much white linen, were settling in their chairs with a deal of hoarse whispering. They smote one another upon the backs in subdued jollity, and the only thing which prevented them from joining in the melody seemed the solicitous reproof instantly administered by his companions to each in turn who ventured to begin.

The railroad operator, bulky, but still firm of figure in his severe black and white, sat at the rear. Egerton could have touched him by reaching across the rail. There was something of discontent in his ponderous merriment which made the boy watch him with interest. The musical comedy could not retain all his attention. He laughed noisily when the men about him nudged his ribs, or pounded his broad knee, but his big hands worked nervously, and most of the time he scowled fixedly across the auditorium. Egerton heard him suddenly, in a rare interval when the orchestra was stilled and the patent-medicine monarch had ceased from shouting.

"I tell you, Jim, I'll pound that little B. & P. down ten points before tomorrow noon," he rumbled hoarsely. "I tell you I can and I will. You get aboard, that's all. I can swing this all alone if I like, but I'm letting you fellows in because you're good fellows. That's all. You know me. I'm little Charley Sands that can make the Street sit up and take notice when he wants exercise." He doubled his fists viciously.

"That's all right," said the other soothingly. "You watch this show. What's the sense in risking so much collateral on a two-cent jerkwater railroad? Here's that cordage deal and the three rivers combination coming on, and things ain't steady, anyway. What's the——?"

"You hear me," interrupted the first

speaker angrily. "I'll knock the spots out of that thing tomorrow, and rise to glory when she comes back. Collateral! Collateral be hanged! Charley Sands has the cash to swing a penny deal like this. Man, haven't I got my pockets full of signed personal cheques right now, only waiting for the amounts to be filled in? Didn't you see me sign 'em? Hey, didn't you see me sign those cheques at dinner when you fellows were trying to rag me? Can't I draw a barrel on my personal account and carry the loose paper without caring what happened to it? Didn't I shut you fellows up when I began signing blank cheques? Cash sales, cash covers and cash buying in and out of the market when she touches bottom. That's me. Take a chance, man. Show your sporting blood. Want to see me sign some more cheques? Want to see——?"

"Oh, those crazy cheques," exclaimed the other in disgust. "Haven't you torn those things up yet? Say, Charley, you ought to have a conservator every time they let you out nights. I ought to make the crowd take 'em away from you. That's the limit of childish braggadocio. Don't try to talk business any more. You'd better go home and put ice coils on your head. Get a policeman to take you, too, or you'll be taking a flyer in gold bricks with your dinky blank cheques. You've had too much dinner. Go home, Charley, go home."

"Damn it!" snapped Sands. "I will go home. That's just what I'll do. I don't want a fool show, anyway. I want action." He rose, a trifle unsteadily, amid a chorus of protest. "And I'll get action, too!" he cried. "You fellows watch Sands tomorrow."

Just then the orchestra blared so loudly that the protest ended, and even Egerton craned his neck to see what new commotion was possessing the folk upon the stage. He heard the big man snarling in the narrow corridor behind, but, though he was still unable to see more than the wigs of the actors he became once more absorbed in the study of the stray

brown lock, and ceased all interest in further instructions in high finance.

"Bartlett Pear has gone home," he whispered. "He was getting awfully tired, and he has to have plenty of rest before he begins his highway robbery in the morning."

"It isn't robbery," retorted the girl. "It's just stocks. And he is a wise man. He does things. If you could do as much as he does, we wouldn't have to write so many letters to each other."

"Excuse me," pleaded Egerton. "I didn't realize you had such a taste for piracy."

"Pirating's better than dreaming," said the girl, clapping her hands at the stage.

Egerton touched her arm. "Do you really mean that?" he asked, with a note of seriousness in his voice.

"Of course I do. See the comedian."

"You're more than half right. Don't be surprised if I turn pirate some time. If I had the weapons I'd burn, sink and destroy alongside this boss corsair in the morning."

Having delivered himself of this bloodthirsty utterance, and having seen the girl again turn to the stage, Egerton relapsed into a panoramic study, in which ethics, ideals and his own desires jumbled themselves confusedly and in rhythm with the sprightly music whirled round and round the soft brown curl. He pictured himself wielding the scepter of an industrial king, fighting splendidly against desperate opposition with either glorious triumph or terrific collapse at the ending, and always holding the power of very existence over thousands. In the right or in the wrong, calling for blessings or for maledictions, making for either good or evil, was it not, after all, a thing that counted for more in the life of a world than the most profound of academic discussion or modeling of words into the most wondrous of romance? The like of this fat, heavy-jowled man, who talked loudly and drank too much wine with his dinner, could sway nations. In even

their sheer brutality, they could lift people to a higher plane because they could unite them in hostility. And he, William Egerton, with two degrees and a mind and a soul, who could spend an afternoon of sheer delight before a Rembrandt and forget his dinner in a Browning poem, would be only an unconsidered atom of a spectator.

This was the brain surge of Egerton, the analyst, which floated away on the notes of a march-song to make way for the swift dreams of a worldly, envious Egerton, who pictured himself merrily gleaning dollars and sitting before a fire in an oaken-ceiled library, peopled by a girl with a voice of pure melody and a single stray brown curl, who was asking him whether they would be happiest for the summer in the Tyrol or in Vevey.

"Oh, smoke!" said the boyish, material Egerton in the theatre-box. "I've got to win some way. What's that? Show over? Good! We can go out and play now. Where's my overcoat?"

He reached for his garment on the hook where it had been hung by the usher. The hook was bare. He cloaked the girl, tucked his crush hat under his arm, and looked again. No overcoat. Chair and railings were bare. It wasn't on the floor. In the next box the three remaining men were laughingly gathering up their belongings. A fourth overcoat lay where the owner had carelessly thrown it. Egerton hesitated, then, reaching over he picked it up and thrust in his arms. It was a capacious paddock, with long skirts and generous frontal developments. Egerton touched the girl.

"I've got Bartlett Pear's royal purple," he chuckled. "He's gone home in my sackcloth. Wonder how he got into it? Watch me row with fellow-satraps."

He bowed solemnly to the trio.

"I beg your pardon," he said, outstretching the broad lapels of the paddock. "I fancy some one of your party has exchanged coats with me."

The foremost of the three—it was

he who had argued with the departed anent the idiocy of signed cheques—stared in annoyance. "Oh, I think not, young man," he answered. "We're not that sort. You fellows got your coats, haven't you? All right. Come on."

Egerton thrust his hand into the side-pocket and withdrew a packet of letters. "Are you quite sure about it?" he persisted sweetly. "Somehow these don't seem to belong to me."

The other glanced at the envelope. "By George!" he cried. "It's Charley's coat."

"Precisely," agreed Egerton, "and Charley's gone off in mine, though how he inserted himself, I can't imagine."

A third speaker, who had dined with less enthusiasm than his companions, stepped forward. "Very well," he said brusquely, "just you give me the coat. We'll see that yours is returned."

The girl tucked her fingers softly in the crook of Egerton's arm. "I wouldn't think of going out without an overcoat," she advised sturdily. "There's a real chill in the night air."

"Pardon," grumbled the leader. "Of course not. He can't go home without a coat, Armstrong. Just give us these letters and your card. We'll send around in the morning."

Egerton drew out a pasteboard. "I'm staying at the Golconda," he exclaimed, "and I'll give you all the letters but this one." He extracted a single envelope. "I should like to keep that, if you don't mind," he concluded.

"But we do mind." It was the earnest Armstrong. "We'll take all those letters, please."

Egerton smiled with winning amiability. "I'm very sorry to disagree with you," he apologized, "because if we disagree we may all get excited and the theatre people may come up to help us settle it. Perhaps you'd better step down to the next landing and wait for me, Ray." The girl only tightened her fingers.

"You see," he continued, facing the diners, "I'm afraid you may forget

about me in the diversions of an evening, and I don't know anything about Charley, except that he seems to be unusually well nourished." He flapped the heavy paddock. "Now, if I keep this letter, Charley may feel anxious about it when he's eating breakfast and hasten a bit with my coat. And if he doesn't, why, I know a fellow down at Mulberry street who could take a look at it and tell just where to find Charley, so I could return it to him. Yes, I'll keep it, I think."

Armstrong flushed angrily. "See here," he began; but the third survivor of the dinner-party, who had been gazing idly at the outgoing audience, broke in. "Hang it," he drawled, "let him keep the letter. It's fair enough. I want to get out."

Armstrong paused. He glanced at Egerton and Egerton grinned. "Oh, all right, if it'll make you feel any better," snapped the older man, picking up his stick. "Good night."

Out in the crowded street Egerton began a violent expansion of his chest. "Just so they won't notice the wholesale nature of my tailoring," he explained. "Now, we'll go somewhere and begin eating again so the evening will last longer. There's no place in the benighted town a pair of people like us can go to talk things over except a restaurant. Besides, I want to show my new clothes."

He led the way toward the glittering gorgon which proclaimed the refectory of Curate.

"Always extravagant," murmured the girl in half-displeasure.

"Regular young fool," he assented. "But it's all right. Going to be rich some day. Going to write a book. Second best seller, and all that sort. Going to take you to the Riviera as wife of distinguished author. Fine."

"Always 'going to,'" said the girl sadly, sinking into her chair. "Always 'going to,' and never quite ready. We've waited years and you've never quite begun."

"Treasure trove!" cried Egerton, with his hand plunged in the inside pocket of the overcoat, as he handed

it to the waiter. "Cracky, Miss Girl! I believe I've got his cheque-book."

He placed a slim red volume on the table. "By Jove, it is," he said. "Now, please, kind lady, get used to housekeeping and order some supper. This thing has been forced upon me, and I'm such a low-down mucker that I'm going to peer into the potentate's private finances."

He turned leaves and stubs rapidly, his eyes brightening with excitement. "Look at this!" he whispered excitedly. "This is worth seeing. Did you ever hear of anything like this? Here are those blank cheques he was talking about, all signed—a half-dozen of them—and any bright-eyed bouncer that would take the trouble to give him knock-out drops might fill them out for all he's got and get the money on them. What an over-fed braggart he is! And what a dinner he must have had to start him on that sort of pyrotechnics. Signed blank cheques, and he in Wall street! What a lot of things you can see in this town!"

"And the funny little half-leaves!" cried the girl. "See whom he's been giving money to. There's the St. Botolph Club, and Self, and Barker & Collins, and Vivian Somebody-or-Other. He's given her a lot. Now, what do you suppose he gave her so much for?"

"Frenzied finance," said Egerton. "You wouldn't understand. But, taken in connection with the rest of this interesting work, it convinces me that my overcoat will come back to me and that it will come back just as soon as Mr. Charley comes to."

"Can't we rob him first?" asked the girl hopefully. "Can't we cash these cheques you think are so wonderful, and live happily ever after? We ought to make him pay for our supper, anyway. It's the least he can do after all the trouble he's made us."

Egerton paused in the service of the lobster à la Newburg. "Ray," he said solemnly, "you're inciting me to deeds of violence. If I could cash one of those cheques—only one, and I wouldn't make it so very large, either

—I'd pass over to the great silent majority tomorrow morning."

"Billy!"

"Yes, I'd marry you." Egerton dropped his tone of banter. "Small girl," he said softly, "do you know that if we had just a tithe of the money this beast is throwing about we could be happy—always?"

"Yes," answered the girl slowly.

"I know it. Why don't we have it?"

"Why?" echoed Egerton.

The girl rested her hand upon the table. "I will tell you," she said. "It's because you are content to sit in the grandstand instead of playing the game. It was that way when you were in college. It is that way now. This man is going to do something with a railroad tomorrow. I don't just understand what it is, but it's something big and there is fight in it; so much that even his friends are afraid. You will watch him do it. If he does it as you think he should do it, you'll praise him, and if he does it in ways you don't approve you will scold; and he will never know whether you praise or blame, and he wouldn't care if he did. You have a fine mind, I'm told, Billy, and I know that you're clever and you have theories that are uplifting and beautiful for making the world better, but as a matter of fact you can't even make it worse. You just don't seem to count. Here is a man who is going to live a little epic tomorrow, and all you can do is to criticize his personality."

For a full minute Egerton stared. Then he carefully laid down knife and fork and began forthwith to speak in strange fragments. "You mean to tell me—" he said, and stopped short. "To scheme and grasp and care for nothing—" he went on incoherently; "and yet a little while ago, up there in the box, I knew— And the grandstand is for the weaklings—perhaps—" His fingers, drumming upon the cloth, tapped the open cheque-book. He paused. Slowly he closed the book and placed it in his pocket. Then he picked up the knife and fork and straightened himself in his chair.

"Tomorrow morning," he announced, "I shall make without labor twenty thousand dollars, and before night I shall marry you to reform you, because, for a girl who's been properly reared on dancing-parties and plenty of outdoor exercise, your ethics are the most wretchedly perverted I ever knew."

"Please don't be silly," pleaded the girl. "I won't be serious any more."

"I stand by my declaration," said Egerton briefly.

And all the way of the ride up to the big apartment house, towering dimly above the Park, Egerton was oddly silent, sitting stiffly with his hands on the apron of the hansom and answering only in monosyllables the little jests and the half-shy advances with which she sought to rouse him. He said good night in the palm-dotted rotunda with a manner that was almost formal, and he turned back to his cab with a briskness so strikingly unusual that the girl gazed at him with hurt in her eyes. Egerton wheeled as though in some subtle communication the hurt had been made known to him. Very tenderly, but very firmly, he took her hand.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I've got to play the game, but tomorrow night—tomorrow night—please remember that you have an engagement with me."

The cabman, after he had deposited his passenger, deposed to his fellows at the stand in the square that the gent he had just driven was talking to himself when he got in at Ninety-seventh street, and was still talking to himself when he got out at the Golconda, and was yet neither drunk nor crazy, because at no time was his speech lost in mumblings and because his tip was the tip of sobriety. The cabman opined, from the few words he had overheard, that the gent was something heavy in the Street; that he was greatly impressed by his new overcoat, and that he was going to take some sort of big sporting chance the next day. "It's them young fellers that flies high downtown," observed the

sapient cabman, "but I'll bet this one is a fox when it comes to gettin' th' mazuma."

Somewhat similar impressions prevailed in the mind of the suave personage who stood behind the desk at the Golconda, and who was impressed by the earnest manner in which No. 411 instructed against being disturbed for any visitor or other cause before rising; that said No. 411 desired a night of profound rest as invigoration for actions of a very important nature on the morrow. As for Egerton himself, standing in his thin dress clothes squarely before the open window and gazing out at the myriads of tiny lights twinkling like blue-white diamonds, in the great city's ponderous dark, he whistled a bar from "The Baobab Tree," and took the cheque-book from his pocket.

"Is it heroic, or is it a joke, or is it just raw larceny?" he asked, addressing the inrushing air. "Anyway, I'm going to do it."

He waved his hand gaily to the north and drew the shade.

They halted him on his way to the breakfast-room in the morning to tell him of a telephone call, of a club servant with an overcoat, and of Mr. Charles S. Sands, who would himself stop in on his way downtown, because in accordance with Mr. Egerton's express orders they had refused to establish telephone connection with No. 411, and had sent the club servant whence he came. It was comfortably evident that the name of Sands was not unknown to the Golconda, and that guests of an importance sufficient to command his early morning attendance received its esteem. The esteem rose to perhaps even greater heights when the guest found it hardly worth his while to await the arrival of his prospective visitor, departing with brief word that he would call upon Mr. Sands in his office. It is possible also that its warming glow permeated even the guest, for Egerton strode out through the revolving door with a step of unwonted jauntiness and but a short time later presented himself

at the business quarters of the well-known operator, smiling, fresh, and apparently confident, such is the encouraging power of appreciation.

There were difficulties in the approach to the person of Mr. Sands. They took the form of a male child, inclined toward slang and impudence, some youthful clerks with pens back of their ears and manners of importance, and lastly an older man of the confidential type who possessed a manner of extreme graciousness, but who was none the less of adamant in refusal. In the end Egerton scrawled just below the engraved name on his visiting-card, "Bringing an overcoat and some cheques." Very shortly thereafter he entered the glass-walled sanctum.

It was obvious that Mr. Sands was under something of a tension, and that his physical being was not altogether comfortable. His greeting bore conventional courtesy, but his eyes shifted uneasily; he did not seem wholly pleased at the advent of his visitor.

"I have to apologize to you, sir," he began. "I'm afraid I have caused you considerable inconvenience with my unfortunate mistake. I sent to your hotel early——"

"It was very kind of you," interrupted Egerton, "but I preferred to call upon you here. You see, I'm interested in the market."

"Ah!" grunted the other, with a look of sharpness. Then reaching his finger toward a button, "I'm sorry that I haven't time to go into that with you personally. This is going to be a lively day with me, but Mr. Knapp, my head clerk, will be glad to aid you. I'll just have your coat brought in and relieve you of my stuff."

"Please don't ring," urged Egerton evenly. "I'll get my coat on the way out, and I sha'n't detain you long. You see, I've got your cheque-book."

"Oh, yes, so you have!" The operator assumed the manner of a jovial gentleman remembering a trifle. "I did have that in my overcoat, I believe. Pretty careless."

"Extremely so," agreed Egerton.

"There were some signed cheques in it—blank."

Sands summoned more joviality. "You're right," he guffawed. "A—silly grandstand play for the boys at dinner. Fortunate they fell into good hands."

"Yes. Isn't it? Here's the book. Here are the cheques—all but one." Egerton was speaking very slowly and his lips closed tightly between his words. "I have taken the liberty of filling that out for two thousand dollars and making it payable to William H. Egerton."

The big man half-rose from his chair, his face purpling. Then he dropped back with a hoarse laugh. "My young friend," he chuckled heavily, "do you drink with your breakfast?"

"Sometimes," admitted Egerton. "I didn't this morning."

"Are you crazy, then, that you think you can come in on me with a game like this?" Again he stretched his hand toward the push button.

"I wouldn't do that," advised Egerton sharply. "It'll only make a horrid muss—for you."

"But, you little crook——"

"Not so loudly, please. You captains of industry have such powerful voices. Besides, I'm only negotiating a small loan which I shall pay back to you tomorrow."

"Loan! Nonsense! I never heard of you! I'll make you no loan! Clear out!"

"Oh, be reasonable." Egerton's voice was fine silk. "I'm perfectly willing to leave, but you really ought to be accommodating, considering the trouble I've been to about your overcoat. When I go out I'm going to take this small loan—this cheque—with me, and if you stop payment or try to be nasty it will make me so angry I shall probably tell everybody about Charley Sands's overloaded dinner last night and what he did with his cheque-book to show off. It may be in the newspapers, too—I'm a newspaper man—and it will make you seem sort of foolish."

"Huh!" Mr. Sands's snort expressed both contempt and relief.

"And more than that I shall probably tell all about little Charley Sands's plan for stunts with B. & P. today. There are people who would be tremendously interested in that, you know."

"Huh!" This time the note of relief was absent.

"Besides, if these things don't make a stir, I've got a letter—I don't say it's signed Vivian——"

This time Sands sprang to his feet. "You dirty little blackmailer!" he cried. "What's your price?"

"There isn't any price," corrected Egerton softly, "and if you call me blackmailer there won't be any loan. I shall hand you back your cheque and your letter and go to some other captain of industry with my B. & P. story. Please apologize."

The man of the market sat down. "I ask your pardon," he wheezed. "This beats me. What is your game?"

"Merely that small friendly loan I mentioned before. I want to speculate, and I haven't the capital. I want to rob the people just as you do because the people aren't listening to my advice and may learn more from experience, but mostly because I need money for a very particular purpose. I shall repay you in the morning. Shall we call the matter settled?"

"What in— What kind of a thing is this? What are you trying to do, and what am I wasting time listening to you for?" fumed the operator. "Here, give me those things, and I'll give you ten dollars and not call the police." He tilted himself backward and stared at the boy through half-closed eyes. "You little fool, don't you know that even if I let you screw this money out of me, you'd only lose every penny? This is no playground for kids."

"Oh, no, I sha'n't," asserted Egerton blithely. "I know what's going to happen to B. & P., you see, and besides, I shall follow your lead. That's a good thing to follow, they tell me. I can't very well go wrong. If I do you

will have to wait a little longer for your money, that's all. It will take me about three years to pay you, counting what I shall get for writing a story around this experience for some magazine."

Sands swung to and fro in his revolving chair. "It's insanity," he said, "and they could put me in an asylum—and I could put you behind the bars for this."

"Quite wrong," said Egerton. "You couldn't. It's only a modern business transaction, and I've asked you to be decent once before. It's just a sporting chance, you see. And I'm getting like you. I want 'action.'"

The Sands countenance, which had been twisted into ugliness, relaxed into something very like a grin. "You're getting 'action,' I guess," he chuckled. He drummed the desk and moved his great body in the chair as he said slowly, "Youngster, I'll take a sporting chance, too. Not because you've scared me, but because I like your nerve. I'll let you keep that cheque and amuse yourself."

"Thanks," said Egerton. "I felt sure you would. It's only till tomorrow, you know. Here's your overcoat, and here's your letter. It has a typewritten address on a business envelope, so I fancy it isn't from the Vivian person. All the same, please don't try to welch."

The other bit his lip. "I judge you don't know Charley Sands," he said grimly. "Here, I'll send a clerk around to the bank with you. You'll want cash, and you'll want to be ready on time if you're going to follow B. & P."

"Thanks," said Egerton.

"And one thing more, Mr.—er— youngster. You'll probably operate through the buckets. Better spread your money. No one of 'em will stand it very heavy. That's just friendly advice to go with this friendly transaction."

When Egerton emerged into the open air he wondered that he perspired so freely despite the cold, and that his craving for cigarettes seemed both insistent and insatiable. His

fingers trembled when he tried to strike matches, and he knew that the thumping of his heart must be audible to the solemn-faced paying-teller who performed the marvel of pushing crisp bank-notes into his hands under the brass grillwork. Then the money lust came upon him and he clutched the notes, half expecting them to vanish and to find himself waking from a nap over his own desk in the tobacco-reeking newspaper office. They only crackled in his fingers. Back to the street he went, stared into tense, eager faces as they hurried past and heard the speech of excitement on every side. "Steady, Billy Egerton," he muttered. "You're almost through, and you aren't the cheering section, anyway. You're playing." Thereafter he was calm, inquiring the way to various offices as easily as he had talked to the big man in the swivel chair.

B. & P. went down. It was not a big stock, and the truly great, such as are pictured in the newspapers and have the power to tell each other truthfully what the Congress of the United States is going to do next day, were only mildly interested. But it made disheveled men rush in and out of little glass-walled caverns, gesticulating wildly, and on 'change there sometimes rose a maddened roar. All the morning Egerton, in a high-backed chair, watched a wizened-faced lad slapping fractional figure blocks against a black background. B. & P. was dropping, dropping, dropping. The man beside Egerton swore. Once the boy dropped a figure block and people laughed nervously. Egerton laughed, too. He was making money—money enough for a holiday in the Tyrol—money enough for a bird apartment with books and rugs and an open fire.

"What a grasping, blood-sucking cad you are, to be sure," said Egerton to himself. "Some poor devils must pay for all this. Don't you know it? You're helping to break them. Why don't you chuck it and be clean?" He moistened his lips. "We've waited so long," he said.

B. & P. went almost to the bottom.

Then it hesitated, see-sawed and climbed a tiny step back. "Cover and close," commanded Egerton.

"Oh, cover this and get aboard for the return trip," urged the broker. "This is just hammering. She's bound to go up in a day or two. I know that line. You're on velvet. Come in and make a pile."

"Just close," repeated Egerton. "I've gone about to the end today. How much have I won—made?"

It had been a very bad slump and he had been on the right side. He went back to his hotel, wearied in every fiber, but with his brain churning feverishly. He was richer by nearly twenty thousand dollars, and to Egerton that sum meant much. "With this to help, I can take care of them now," he said, as he dressed himself in his evening clothes. "I can ease up a bit on the grind and try a book and do something worth while. But that chap who cursed when he was hurt, and that big Sands with his tentacles out—heigh, ho!—anyway, I did it, and did it with my bare fists—and she's waiting for me. Boy, get me an electric. I want to go up to Ninety-seventh street in a hurry."

A half-hour later Egerton stood with the girl in the little drawing-room. "You needn't hesitate," he was saying. "You are going to marry me, and you are going to marry me now. You can tell them when we come back for your things. I'm doing things today." He stepped beside her. "Dear lady," he said, "you are not afraid to go away with me?"

Fifteen minutes more, rattling over cobblestones, which yet gave no sound, slurring over asphalt which floated them as air. The cab stopped before a somber brownstone on a shadowy cross-street, and waited five—ten minutes. They came back down the high steps, the girl pale, trembling, perfect trust in her gray eyes; Egerton silent and strong. A direction, the sharp slam of the door, and then the blessed darkness of the cab.

"Dearest," for the first time in all the trying day the boyish voice was

shaky, "you are mine now—my wife. I fought, and I'm not sure I didn't fight on the wrong side. But I fought for you—and I don't care."

Came morning, clear, golden and beautiful. Again Egerton was in the glass-walled office of Sands, the operator. Entrance was not a thing of difficulty this time. "I've come to repay that little loan," he said. "Here it is in cash."

The man of railroads laughed. There had been a glorious destruction of bulls, and the end was not yet. "I had an idea you'd come," he answered. "That's why I let you have it."

"Yes. I should have paid you last night, but I was busy. I was being married."

Sands whistled. "You harum-scarum kid!" he roared. "So that's what made you so keen!"

"Yes. We thought we couldn't be happy without a lot of money, so we got it. It doesn't seem to count for so much now. We'd be happy anyway."

The operator rested a hand on the boy's shoulder. "It will count," he said, almost gently. "And when you're needing more, come back to me. No more hold-ups, mind you, but a youngster with your nerve can do well down here."

"Thank you," said Egerton a little wearily, "but I guess I sha'n't come back. Somehow high finance doesn't appeal."

"Try it without the sandbag preliminaries. And as for this loan—you and I had quite a day on the Street together. A small wedding present——"

Egerton opened the door. "I thank you again," he said, "but no. I keep what I hacked out myself, because, in a way, I earned it. That ends my relation with you. And anyway, I shouldn't like to think Mrs. Egerton indebted to a friend of Vivian. Good-bye."

Sands dropped heavily into his chair. "Well, I'll be damned!" he said, and then almost solemnly: "I'd like to see his girl."



AN OMINOUS OUTLOOK

"A CULLUD man ain't got no mo' show in de law dan a snowball in de Pit o' Tawment!" gloomily said old Brother Utterback. "It's built like a jug, de law is, wid de han'le right in de white man's hands. Dar's muh son, now; I's pow'ful 'feared dey's uh-gwine to convict him of stealin' a white man's chickens, spite-uh his innercence. He's uh-gwine to plead not guilty, and bring up as many as ten udder niggers dat will stullify dat he was at fo' diff'unt dances and a eyester supper at de incidental time dat dem fowls was embezzled; and I's uh-gwine, muhse'f, to sw'ar he was home de whole endurin' night; and yit it's likely dat de judge will r'ar back and flung de limit and longitude of de law onto him, when de only discriminatin' sarcumstance in de wide world dey've got ag'in him am dat he was ketched in de hen-house. Yassah! When a nigger is drug up befo' de pomposity of de law he mought dess as well wave his hand and remark, 'Uh-good-bye, folks; I's uh-gwine fum yo'!' uh-kaze de po' scoun'rel is on his way even befo' he gits started."

BREAKING THE ENGAGEMENT

By Ethel M. Kelley

DEAR JACK:
I have something to tell you;
I hardly know how to begin.
I'm ashamed, but I think it is well you
Should fathom the depths of my sin.
You'll think that misfortune befell you
That day—that sweet day—when we met,
Though, of course, dear, I could not compel you
To love—or forget.

I can't be engaged any longer;
I've tried and I've tried to be true,
But my wickedness seems to be stronger
Than even my love, dear, for you.
Here's food for the glib scandal-monger—
Oh, dear, how they'll talk about me!
Yet still to be bound would be wrong, for
I ought to be free.

Real life is much different from fiction;
The girl who's betrothed in a book
Is possessed of the earnest conviction
There's but one man that's worthy a look.
In actual fact the restriction
Seems only to tempt her the more.
Oh, the heart is a strange contradiction
When you're learned in its lore!

I fancy you're saying, "Who is he?"
It isn't a man, dear—it's *men*!
My fancy must be pretty busy,
Or else it goes roaming again—
Goes scaling the heights till it's dizzy,
And stands on the peak of romance.
I want to keep asking, "Is this he?"
Coquetting with chance.

I had such a miserable summer,
Alone with the moon and the sea.
Whenever a handsome newcomer
Arrived, I would think, "Not for me!"
There is nothing that makes me much glummer
Than to think I *may* not though I *can*.
Some pine for variety, some for
"A steady young man."

And some want the two things together.
 Oh, Jack, can you understand this?
 I like to be tied to the tether
 That holds me enchained to your kiss.
 It isn't a question of whether
 I would be your sweetheart, you know,
 I feel I'm not fit, dear. Your feather-
 Brained, frivolous
 Jo.

P. S.—Every blot on that page meant
 A tear, for I'm crying, of course.
 I never expect an assuagement
 Of sorrow and shame and remorse!
 I wish you would fly in a rage, vent
 Your wrath on my miserable back,
 And, since I can't stand an engagement,
 Just marry me, Jack!



HIS DECISION

“EVERY now and again there is a discussion of the question of what is the proper definition of the word ‘news,’” acridi-pessimistically said the Old Codger, during a recent session of the Linen Pants Club. “Many able men have from time to time answered it, with perfect satisfaction to themselves, and still the question won’t stay settled.

“Last night I read in my paper that the King of What-d’ye-call-it—some little E-flat dab of land over there somewhere—is complaining bitterly of poverty b’cuz he has only a paltry \$887,500 a year and a herd of little kings to support, and that two beautiful young ladies who were waiting table in a restaurant in Kansas City fought a duel with ketchup bottles for love’s sweet sake. I also learned of a burglar who remained concealed behind a cabinet organ while a village maiden played hymn tunes on it for three solid hours; that a certain side-whiskered octopus owns the oldest pair of andirons in existence; and that a bright young man in IZARD County, Ark., only twenty years of age, has just succeeded in bein’ accidentally shot for the ‘leventh time by mistake for something or other; I noted that a fool woman had grabbed an innocent United States senator by the th’oat and kissed him despite his squirms; I learned, too, how to pronounce jiu-jitsu, and the reason why a lady in New Harmony, Ind., sued her husband for divorce—she alleged that he kicked her on the sly with his wooden leg. I also gained a vast mass of information about sanitary mattresses and breakfast foddors, the freaks and follies of the rich and their envious imitators, how to buy whisky and grow tall by mail; and so on and so forth.

“And, thinking it over, I couldn’t help concluding that ‘news,’ as understood and disseminated by the press of today, is largely a conglomeration of breeze, bray, piffle and non-essential flap-doodle, and that the heads of the kind of people who appreciate that kind of stuff must surely be more or less flattened at the poles.”

TOM P. MORGAN.

THE WONDERFUL BLOSSOM

By Arthur H. Adams

IT was with a strange uplifting of the heart that I, who had viewed all the width of the world, saw the sweet greenness of the little Isle of Man rise again from the mists of the sea. I had been away for thirty years, and yet as the steamer drew nearer and more near to that dear island of winds and rains and greenness I felt that here, after all, was my world, here the one plot of land that held my heart. For the Manx, great wanderers though they be, may never wipe from their hearts the memories of misty peaks and hillsides of heather and the gallant blaze of gorse and broom in the steep and noisy glens.

But that evening as I sat after dinner with my old friend and discussed our schoolfellows of King William's College at Castletown, it came upon me that though this isle had seemed forgotten by the world, here Time had been busy, too. Name after name of old schoolmates I mentioned, and to each my friend had but a short reply.

"Keig? Gone across the water—I hear he is doing well in Manchester. Cregeen? He's in London, I believe; haven't heard of him for years. Mylrea? Ah! he's dead. Went out to New Zealand and was drowned in a flood. Quilliam? Dead, too—shot in South Africa."

So the list went on. And then I asked of Keene—Percy Keene, the best bat in the school college, the rising barrister, the member of the House of Keys, whom we had all expected to be the next deemster. But it was in no fear that I asked of him.

For years after I had left Man he had written to me, chronicling the incidents of a steady success—how he had won this great case, how this speech of his had stirred the island, how he had carried this reform through a hostile House. But twenty years ago his letters had suddenly ceased; and from that day a silence closed about him. Success, I thought, had swallowed his friendship up, and he had had no time to write to me.

"Keene?" said my friend quickly. "Ah! that's an extraordinary case. I don't yet know what to make of him. But surely he wrote and told you?"

I shook my head.

My friend smoked on. "No," he said at length, "perhaps he wouldn't say anything. Likely enough he found he could not explain his action even to an old friend. I doubt if he could have explained it to himself."

"I know nothing," I reminded him.

"Didn't you hear that Keene utterly gave up his practice, threw away his chances, obliterated every hope he had of ever being deemster? Then I must tell you the story. After you left the island Keene went on, brilliant fellow as he was, year after year piling up a bigger practice. Nothing seemed to impede his career. In the House he became the acknowledged leader of the people's party; reform after reform he effected; and all the while his popularity grew. It was just twenty years ago that he paused within reach of the goal of his ambition. One of the deemsters had died, and everybody knew that the vacant position must be offered to Keene.

But while we waited the thing occurred. He suddenly resigned his position in the House, sold his big town house and gave up his practice."

"Where is he now?" I asked in amazement.

"On the island, living in an old house on the old road to Ballasalla."

"And what does he do?"

"He grows flowers."

I was silent with surprise. "Keene never cared for flowers," I commented at last.

"Not then; he thinks of nothing else now."

"He gave up his career when the prize was within his grasp," I said in wonderment, "to grow flowers!"

"He has a huge garden and spends all his time there. He supplies all the Liverpool and Manchester flower-shops. He has won innumerable prizes at horticultural shows—and I fancy there is a new carnation that is named after him."

"And is he content?"

"He regards it as fame." My friend smiled. He looked long after a smoke-ring that he had sent spinning across the room. "One never can tell," he went on gravely. "It may seem to Keene that to grow a new flower, to develop a common weed into something strangely beautiful, to impress his will upon that race of sensitive, meek things and like a god weave beauty out of insignificance—this patient, tender control of a world so far beneath him, yet so humbly responsive, may offer him triumphs and anguishes keener and more splendid than the impress one man can make on his own world. He stands above that wonderful world like a divinity, and at his bidding this way-side weed puts forth an unforeseen beauty, this calyx becomes what for millions of years it had dreamed of being."

"He once showed me a strange thing. He had brought a plant from the other side of the world—a species of veronica native to New Zealand. He had this plant—it was called the 'whipcord' veronica—growing in a

warm corner of his garden. It looked less like a living plant than a bunch of seaweed, and its hard, tight green stems devoid of leaves gave good reason for its distinctive name. It had been growing for centuries in the high altitudes of New Zealand, six thousand feet above sea-level. In that dreary environment the plant had no chance. Its brothers that grew everywhere on the pleasant warm hillsides far beneath it put forth a luxuriance of leaves and rich blossoms. Yet this poor, chilled, starved thing, left among the snowdrifts and glaciers, did not die. Its leaves could not come forth; yet it survived—a pitiable thing of bare, thin stems and atrophied leaf-buds. And Keene brought it back to its old environment, put it in the warmth and moisture it yearned for, sheltered it beneath glass, and its leaves, lying for so many centuries dormant, came newly forth! That seemed to me a wonderful thing. After all those millions of years of imprisonment in snow and ice, the blind leaves had not forgotten their way to the sun! There seemed to me to be reason for the look of triumph on Keene's face when he showed that new birth of leaves to me."

There was a silence. I looked back on memories. I recalled the ambitions of my old schoolmate, his brilliant possibilities. And it had all come to this—the crossing and cultivation of flowers. He had won prizes at horticultural shows—he supplied the Liverpool shops—

"And the reason?" I said, though I guessed.

"There was a girl. Keene was then thirty-five; she was just eighteen. She was a type not rare in this island. You know the legend of the wreck of a ship of the Spanish Armada on the south of the island. The name of the point—Spanish Head—recalls that happening, though all that remains of the tale is little. The great galleon, swinging round into the Irish Channel, fleeing in blind fear of Drake and his English, was wrecked on that reef of

black rocks. A few of the crew swam ashore, the fearful Manx peasants watching them afar, wondering what new manner of beings were these lithe, dark-bearded, swarthy men. The Spaniards made their way unmolested up the hillside, and next morning, maddened and desperate, beat back the attack of their red-haired assailants. And at last the Manx drew off and left the strangers in possession of that corner of the island. And gradually the mutual fear faded; and here and there a fair Manx girl met and loved and mated with one of these dark-hued foreigners and took his unintelligible name. And in that part to this day there are faintly disguised Spanish names, and in some of those farms yet appear dark-eyed, black-haired girls, with all the languor and slim grace and the strange witchery of their Southern ancestors.

"She was one of these—an elfishly beautiful girl, with a complexion that glowed in a somber richness and eyes dark as a moonless night. And Keene, the successful advocate of thirty-five, with his hand already closing on the great prize of his life, met this girl and was overcome by her outlandish beauty. She was only a farmer's daughter, but lovely as a rose."

"And she died?" I said.

"Yes," answered my friend, "she died. It was within a fortnight of their marriage, for Keene, infatuated, would have no delay. She died slowly, and her father and mother, grim Manx people, watched her die with the fatalism of the islanders. Keene got her doctors from England; but the old people laughed. She was to die; why waste time and money over a dead person? So she died. And we, who knew what was in store for Keene, said it was the best thing. Such a match would have spoiled his chances for the deemstership."

"And then?"

My friend waved his hand vaguely. "The old house on the road to Ballasalla—the prizes at horticultural shows—the new carnation—the supplying of Liverpool flower-shops——"

II

NEXT day I made my way to the old house on the road to Ballasalla. It lay back from the road, surrounded by woods. In the chill afternoon it looked a bleak place. A rusty gate led into a garden overgrown, and the house had a look of desertion. I knocked twice before I heard a movement; then the door opened and something thin and haggard and gray peered out. I looked long before I recognized Keene.

I told him my name and he remembered. I entered a curious house. The hall was littered with boxes of seeds and packing-cases. Through these I was guided to the library. The books had been cleared out to make room for a disorderly collection of seeds and plants. Packets of bulbs, specimens of patent fertilizers, saucers containing seeds, catalogues of seed-merchants spread over the table and littered the floor. His bedroom, into which he subsequently led me to search for a new species of narcissus, was clustered with dry bulbs. No servant was visible. In the library fireplace stood a dirty oil-stove leaking kerosene, and the remains of his breakfast reposed on the table among the catalogues.

And in that little, bent old man I had difficulty in recognizing the arrogant, triumphant youth of my memory. His talk was disjointed and hesitant, as if he had been unaccustomed to any other auditor than himself.

"Yes," he said, sweeping an assortment of dead daffodils from a chair and placing it for me. "I've had my triumphs, of course. That carnation of mine—there's nothing like it in the world. There never has been a blossom like that before. Yet it has always existed. But only I divined it; only I saw it waiting all these centuries for its birth. And so through me it realized itself, through me there came a new beauty into this old world."

"If that carnation could think—if it had a soul," said I, laughing, "it would be very grateful to you for having called it into being."

Keene glanced sharply into my face.

"If—? If flowers have souls? Why shouldn't they have souls? Not yet fully developed, perhaps, but—" He broke off with a short laugh. "But we are jesting, you and I. Such a supposition is absurd, isn't it?" There came a look of cunning into his eager face. "You've not heard—stories—in Douglas, about me—about my garden and the things I do there? They tell foolish tales about me, I've heard—and all I do is to experiment with new blooms and grow flowers for the shops. You haven't heard—stories about me?"

He cringed to me in his anxiety, and his wheedling tone struck at all my splendid memories of him. What a wreck was here!

"I've heard of your change of occupation," I said easily, "and guesses have been given as to reasons; but that is all. After all, it is your own business, Keene."

"Yes," he responded eagerly, "it is my own business. It is a wonderful thing to grow flowers—as I grow them. Think of all the undeveloped beauty and splendor that lie waiting to be called forth from the commonest weed! I take some mean and insignificant blossom and I tend it and teach it to expand, till at last I have a splendor and a miracle. The commonest seed holds for me something as wonderful as the birth of a soul."

He took up a handful of seeds and let them trickle through his dirty fingers. I recalled the exquisite care he used to bestow upon those refined and nervous hands.

"Every one of these seeds," he droned on, "has in it the most gorgeous possibilities of color and form, and only I know what lies hidden, waiting there, and how to give it birth. I work miracles. Is not that an ambition?"

I looked at his lighted face and felt sick at heart. And suddenly the light in his eyes died out; he looked infinitely old.

"Only there is one miracle I can never work—one consummation I can never reach. And yet I know that if I only had time I could effect it. I

get nearer every year. Some day—if I do not die before! I want time! Ah! how I need time!"

"Some new carnation," was my thought as I looked down upon the old man. "May I see your garden?" I asked.

He led me out into its disorder and grew eloquent as he pointed out his pet blooms. It was a matter-of-fact garden, strictly utilitarian in its arrangement. I recalled that he supplied the Liverpool shops. I confess I was disappointed. I had been expecting miracles.

At last we came to a secluded corner of the garden, barred from the rest by a thick hedge of box. Curiosity led me ahead of my host, and I heeded not the gentle tug of his hand upon my arm till I had emerged from beneath the arbor that gave entrance to this seclusion.

I paused, dumb with surprise. I was in a garden of monstrosities. The ground seemed warm beneath my feet; a thick ooze of moisture lay upon the black soil; and everywhere there was a tangle and riot of huge and amorphous blossom. Vaguely I divined that here were new crosses of plants, undreamed-of vagaries and paradoxes of blossoms, naked splendors and abortions of contorted petal and leaf. The space blazed with vivid hues; flaccid green undergrowth ran everywhere, and above this living bed of moist leafage flamed great, orchid-like flowers that almost seemed alive and palpitating. I had an inexplicable feeling that these wondrous new-created things had in their twisted forms something perilously near to intelligence. I turned uneasily. I felt as if I were being spied upon.

"Well?" croaked Keene. "So you've seen my testing ground? I did not mean you to know. I keep this to myself. They tell too many stories about me. But now it cannot be helped. And perhaps it is better that someone else should know—in case anything should happen. You could explain."

"It is all very wonderful," I said uneasily, "but these blossoms are not

beautiful. They are too horribly life-like."

"Ah! You fancy they are alive? They might even have souls?" The old man's mirth was horrible. "Wait, and you shall see!" he muttered gleefully.

He led me into a path beneath that bank of woven splendor. Here and there through that riot of foliage I noticed a plant with hairy, sage-green leaves and a strange, fat, animal-like blossom of a pallid gray hue that filled me with undefined abhorrence. Once as I stooped in that narrow passage one of these full-bodied flowers touched me on the cheek, and I shrank from the chill, moist touch of its clammy petals. The plant seemed to thrive wonderfully in this tangle of growth; everywhere it had woven its long, sage-green creepers.

We came out into a little cleared space, separated by a grass path from that wall of enclosing foliage. There grew a wonderful blossom.

It was a small plant, thickly leaved. It bore but one flower—a bud, newly opening. It was of a delicate flesh color, and the texture was like the skin of a dark girl's cheek! And though closer scrutiny disclosed no reason for my feeling, at the first glance the blossom conveyed to me the impression of almost human features. It looked in its still perfection of form like a sleeping woman; it looked alive!

I felt that at any moment that sleeping flower might tremble and stir, might wonderingly open its dark and dreaming eyes.

"Ah!"

It was a cry of rage from the old man. His gaze drew mine. Reaching across the grass pathway that separated the plant from the enclosing screen of vivid blossom was a long gray sucker of the plant whose clammy petals had touched me on the cheek. It seemed like an arm outstretched to grasp the beauty of that wonderful blossom.

Keene whipped a knife from his pocket and severed the spray of gray-green leaves and with it one of those sickly gray blooms. It sank limply

to the ground, its leaves shriveling almost as it fell. And through the tangle of lush growth beyond there ran a shudder, as if that wide-spreading plant felt through all its tentacles the shock of the amputation.

"It is a highly developed variety of a Brazilian sensitive plant," explained the old man. "You see that those leaves and that bloom are already dead. I must take this spray away. Its odor might harm this plant. It smells almost like decaying flesh. And it is so astonishingly rapid in growth. Only this morning I cut off another tendril that was reaching across toward my plant. I fear its touch upon that blossom."

I shuddered. The place seemed alive.

"And this flower?" I queried, pointing to the wonderful blossom.

"You do not know the species?" He looked cunningly at me. "Nobody knows but myself. And I will not tell. I have been at work upon this plant for nineteen years; and every spring its bloom becomes nearer the ideal I have always seen within it. This year it promises to be perfect. What do you think it looks like?"

The question was asked with an unconcern that did not deceive me. I felt the intense interest throbbing beneath those even tones.

"It looks almost human," I answered. "Though there is no semblance of features, it gives me the overpowering impression of a veiled woman's face."

Keene's dilated eyes troubled me. "Wait," he cried; "wait till it comes fully into flower!"

"That will soon be?"

"The night after next. It will open at last—so I have calculated—into the moonlight at ten o'clock. And then I shall know——"

He cast a quick glance of suspicion at me and paused. Then, as if mastering himself, he continued in a quieter tone. "For all these years I have been experimenting on this one flower; I have developed it petal by petal, eliminating every suspected weakness,

checking every vagary and relapse, forever guiding it upward in the scale, teaching it as one would teach a dog or a child, to help on its own development, to strive toward its utmost height. You fancy there are unbridgeable divisions between the worlds of plant and animal. What does the latest science teach us about matter? There is no division. All is one grand scale, from simplest organism to the most complex; even the difference between life and non-life is only a question of degree—not of kind. From some common ancestor—something that was half-plant, half-animal—the two worlds have been slowly differentiated. And you will tell me that it is impossible for anyone to bridge those two divisions and turn a plant into an animal? I say to you that a flower has a soul; I say more, that I can develop that soul. You will see. Only there are dangers. Things unforeseen come in the train of my experiments. You cannot meddle with known laws without taking grave chances. If you upset the equilibrium of Nature you must expect monstrous consequences. Those blossoms”—he waved his hand toward the screen of strange foliage—“are all abortive experiments—mistakes that taught me much. And twice, unforeseen, my one blossom has been killed; once by the frost, and last year when it was to have reached its fullest maturity, it was strangled by that gray plant. And once again it seems reaching out as if to crush it! It almost seems as if that gray thing hated it!”

The garden seemed full of vague presences and perils. I led the old man outside that hedge of box and went away.

Poor Keene! If he were merely growing flowers for the Liverpool shop!

III

I TOLD all these things to my friend. “That reminds me,” he said. “I remember Keene talking to me the day after the funeral of that girl. He

wouldn’t go to see her buried. I asked him why, and he said, ‘She is not dead.’ And then the grief-crazed man went on to tell me his belief. He was convinced that the soul of the girl would come to him. She was destined for him, he asserted, and this cruel mischance that had snatched her from him could not separate them forever. He thought that her soul, temporarily thwarted in its desire to come to him, would find out other ways.”

“Come to him on this earth?” I asked. Light was beginning to grow in me.

“Yes; Keene believed that her soul would find her way to him while he lived. ‘Else,’ he said to me, ‘why am I left here? Why wasn’t I killed, too? No; she will remember and come. Only, I must help her, must find out the way for her and make her return easy.’ That was how he talked.”

“But why did he turn to flowers?”

“Her face, as I remember it, was singularly like a flower. And in her garden at Port Erin there was a riot of blossom. The geraniums grew like weeds. Keene told me all her thoughts were of flowers. She taught him to love flowers. Oh, there was ample reason why he should seek her deliverance through the avenue of flowers.”

So it was more pitiable than I had thought!

I decided to keep close watch upon the garden on the evening fixed for the blossoming of the wonderful flower. But business called me over the water, and it was late the following night before I returned to the island. My first question to my friend was of Keene. There was no word of him. So, after dinner—it was a fine, moonlit night—I proposed walking over to his house. My friend assented, smiling at my anxiety.

There was no light in the house. After vainly knocking, I tried the door, found it unlocked and entered. Lighting matches, we groped our way through the littered rooms. All were empty.

“Let us look in the garden,” said my friend. We went out into the moon-

light, and I guided my companion to the hedge of box. We passed through the shadow of the gateway and made our way cautiously between the banked luxuriance of vivid and monstrous blossoms. And as we went I noticed that this mass of foliage was almost choked and overrun with that horrible gray plant. Its heavy, gray-green leaves hung everywhere; everywhere its flaccid, gray blossoms climbed and spread.

We came out into the open space wherein the wonderful blossom had sanctuary. We paused in dismay.

At first I could make out nothing but a gross tangle of that gray-green plant, its sickly, cold blooms flowering monstrously in the moonlight. They looked heavy and lax, as if full fed. I had a swift repulsion, as if I were looking on an animal gorged to repletion.

Beneath that lush new growth—it covered all the space where once the grass path had shielded the wonderful blossom—lay a dark body.

We cut the tangle away; and as the knife cut the creepers, the fat, gray blossoms shriveled and through all that bank of flowers around us once more I felt a shiver run.

Keene lay as if he had fallen overcome in an attempt to shield the wonderful blossom from some grim assailant. He was dead.

And dead, too, lay the wonderful blossom, with three of those flaccid, gray flowers, like gigantic insects, battenning on its decaying beauty.

Suddenly I glanced over my shoulder in a swift access of horror. Again I felt as if I were being spied on.

But there were only flowers about us.

"I wonder," said my friend, after we had carried the poor body into the house, "whether there is any truth in the rumor that Keene, after the burial, had the girl's body conveyed here and buried in the garden?"

"I wonder," I said, "if he had ever read that poem of Keats's, 'The Pot of Basil'?"



SOPHISTRY

JESTING and gay, he went his way;
The world denied him naught,
And what he gave, this careless knave,
Was less than what he sought.

Yet, kind the while, he tossed a smile
To all who passed his door,
So graciously, they did not see
He never gave them more!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



THE REASON

MRS. GOODSOUL—Tut, tut! Why are you crying, little boy?
LITTLE BOY—'Cuz I'm too young to swear!

VAGABONDS

A^N easy foot in an easy shoe—
And who is it cares where the road leads to?

An old plank gate at the lane's green end—
And who is it cares where the lane may wend?

A vagabond foot and a vagabond road,
And the song in our hearts our only load.

A bowl of milk and a bit of bread—
Who richer dines or is better fed?

A crust, a spring, and a blackberry—
And who is it sups as well as we?

A hut by the road and a girl to kiss—
What man hath greater bliss than this?

The night, the stars, and a pillow of hay—
Whose bed is sweeter than this, I say?

Whose dreams are deeper, whose sleep as pure?
The heart that's heavy finds here its cure.

MADISON CAWEIN.



A FIXING SOLUTION

G^{ENERAL} TRAFFIC MANAGER—So forty were killed in the wreck? We must fix the responsibility.

SUPERINTENDENT OF REBATES—Hadn't we better fix the roadbed?

PRESIDENT—All will be well if we fix the Legislature.



H^E—What made you think I had inherited my money?

S^{HE}—Why, I didn't see how you could have come by it in any other way!

THE SAD AWAKENING OF JENKINSBY

By George Bronson-Howard

CELIA'S younger sister was reading in the parlor when the doorbell jangled. She bounced upward and started into the hall; then, true to the traditions of West Baltimore, she remembered, stepped to one of the parlor windows, pushed back the curtains of imitation lace, and peered out. As she peered she giggled.

"Tom Jenkinsby!" were the words formed between giggles. She stepped into the hall and opened the door.

"Oh, it's you!" she exclaimed, with assumed surprise. "Oh, it's you!" From her tone, one listening might have fallen under the impression that the visitor came but seldom. "Come in, Mr. Jenkinsby." She giggled again. "Celia is upstairs."

A young man, attired in a ready-made, fawn-colored overcoat of exaggerated cut—according to the maker's advertisements, "the swaggerest of the season"—entered. He was not an ill-looking young man; his features were more or less regular and his forehead showed latent intelligence; but there was a certain self-satisfied vacuity about the eyes and mouth, and his black hair, parted in the middle, was brushed sleekly down over his brow.

"How are you, Miss Myrtle?" he inquired, with a smile that came dangerously near to being a smirk. He stepped out of the narrow vestibule into the narrow hall and, pushing aside the wonderfully colored near-silk portières, stepped into the parlor.

"Oh, I'm pretty well. Right cold outside, is it not?" Miss Myrtle enunciated this peculiar combination of unauthorized words and stiff correctness with an air of pride.

Tom Jenkinsby informed her that he was indeed happy to hear of her pleasant state of health, and agreed with her that the weather outside was a "little sharp." As he spoke he removed the fawn-colored overcoat, folded it carefully and laid it over an elaborately gilded affair which had once been a kitchen stool. On the piano he placed his brown derby hat, into which, when he had blown out the fingers, he put his gloves. Turning, he surveyed in the mirror over the mantel the reflected image of a young man in a black sack suit which was distinguished by elaborately-padded shoulders, apparent curvature of the waist, and trousers wide enough for two men of his size. His neck was held stiffly erect by a huge turn-down collar, which was held together by a white scarf pulled tightly into it. He placed both hands in his trousers pockets in order that Miss Myrtle might get the full benefit of a dazzling white piqué vest, across which he wore a concatenation of enormous gold-plated links.

Miss Myrtle had been surveying him with some approval, chattering the meanwhile. But his eye betokened a vague unrest, and she was wise enough to note and understand it.

"I'll go up and tell Celia," she announced. Halfway to the door she paused and regarded him fixedly. "My gentleman friend is not coming to-night, so you and Cele won't be disturbed." She paused again and tossed her head. "I'm glad he's not coming, because I've got an exciting novel here." She held out a paper-back affair. "It's awful exciting. 'Wedded, But No Husband.' Ever read it?"

Briefly she outlined a few of the scenes. "Did you?"

"No," replied Mr. Jenkinsby, posing gracefully with one arm on the mantel. "But it sounds something like a play I saw last week." He mentioned the name.

"Did you see that?" inquired Miss Myrtle eagerly. "I was just crazy to go, but ma wouldn't let me. Susy Stokes said the hero was awful handsome—and——"

Mr. Jenkinsby smiled loftily but with tolerance. "They always look pretty good when they're painted up," he explained. "He had some swell clothes, though——"

"Myr—t-l-e! Myr-tle!" came in anything but dulcet tones from the head of the stairs outside.

Miss Myrtle giggled again. "Celia," she informed Mr. Jenkinsby. "She don't like me to talk to her gentlemen friends—never did. Don't know why." Here Miss Myrtle smiled coquettishly, but finding Thomas unresponsive she answered her sister's second call by one in equally sharp tones. "All right, Cele. Don't yell so," and scampered up the stairway.

Mr. Jenkinsby, left alone, turned to the mirror with a relieved sigh and arranged a few stray locks of hair. So pleased was he with the general effect when this had been accomplished that he gazed on the mirrored likeness for some moments. Then he sighed again with much gratification and seated himself on a horse-hair chair, pulling up his trousers into large bulges at the knees, thereby exposing pedal extremities none too small encased in laced shoes of glistening patent-leather, above the near-kid tops of which, hose of a pronounced red was revealed. He looked about him with an air of faint interest, folded his arms heroically, and, elevating his chin a trifle, studied his profile in another mirror, which rested on a nearby table.

In the vernacular of West Baltimore, Thomas Jenkinsby was a "swell-looking fellow," and many girls coveted him for a husband. Many points endeared Tom to his female ac-

quaintances—his "lady friends," as he put it. In the first place, his clothes were always selected with great care from the large assortment shown at Firenheimer's, and were always cut along the approved models for "dressy" men. Attired in these night-mares of tailoring—the same constituting the idea of correct dress among his friends—what natural physical advantages he possessed were wonderfully set off. At least that is how those he knew viewed it. Then, too, he had the reputation of being liberal with his money, often taking the young women he knew to strawberry festivals, oyster-suppers and occasionally to the stock-company productions where orchestra chairs were purchasable at a maximum of fifty cents each.

Thanks to his industrious attendance at the vaudeville and his retentive memory, he picked up many rehabilitated jests, which he used to enliven his conversation; and he was quite famous in his set as a pungent wit.

Sunday morning always found Mr. Jenkinsby at church with some one of his friends of the other sex, and he was known to be a moral young man, eschewing liquor to any extent and very abstemious in the matter of tobacco. He was careful, saving, plodding and industrious, and he had a "good job" in a railroad office. He had gone there as a boy of fifteen. He was now twenty-two and had advanced himself from messenger to bill-and-index clerk, whatever that may be. As he believed in the two aphorisms always writ large for the youth, he had grown much moss on his back; and there was more than enough in the bank to purchase shelter when the cataclysmic day came. He generally carried his bank-book with him, and sometimes showed it to favored ones.

For nearly a year now he had been "keeping company" with Miss Celia Boggess, the daughter of a well-known plumber with a large trade, which enabled "pa" to give his daughter more than enough money to allow her to indulge in those sartorial eccentrici-

ties which, among her companions, were regarded as "swell"; and her taste and judgment in selecting these things often caused her friends to say that she looked "perfectly horrid."

After eight months of Tom Jenkinsby's "steady company," three nights a week, with Miss Boggers, his father died and left an estate valued approximately at two thousand dollars; and this, naturally, Tom inherited. After several months had passed, Tom laid himself, his bank-book and his prospects before Miss Boggers. They dazzled her, and she accepted his offer gratefully. They became engaged and were to be married in February. It was now the early part of December.

Some five minutes of waiting, and Mr. Jenkinsby arose and surveyed the parlor with its chair covers of flowery design, its bisque mantel ornaments, and its crayon portraits of relatives in heavy gilt frames. He examined the plush-covered photograph-album and turned over some music on the "baby grand" piano. Then Celia came in.

Tom arose and kissed her. Celia sat down on one of the sofas with the flowery covers, and arranged her plush skirt. Tom seated himself beside her, and again carefully adjusted his trousers in large bulginess. Then he took her hand.

"Don't—somebody might see," objected Miss Boggers, blushing. But her lover did not heed, speaking of something which had nothing to do with the holding of hands.

The conversation drifted into the usual channels. Tom revamped, for her amusement, a series of supposedly comic adventures which he had heard the tramp-comedian recite at the vaudeville, euphemizing some of it, of course, for her delicate sensibilities—for Miss Boggers had strong ideas on what was and what was not "respectable" for a young woman to hear. It was gratifying to Mr. Jenkinsby to hear Miss Boggers laugh at his rendition of the monologue.

She contributed to the information of Mr. Jenkinsby by relating the latest

news and scandal of mutual acquaintances; how Ed. Murphy had "cut out" Charlie Segan with Mabel Donahue; that Jennie Poger had assumed the onerous duties of "saleslady" at Firenheimer's; that Harry Meeker had been promoted to be in charge of Gooch's "gents' furnishing" establishment, and similar interesting matter. When she had exhausted her knowledge and invention on this topic, Mr. Jenkinsby outlined the plot of the melodrama he had seen the night before, and the thrilling scene in which the hero hurled the villain through the French windows into the street below, thereby causing much personal inconvenience to the villain and teaching him not to insult "respectable working girls." Miss Boggers then declared the new leading-man of the stock-company at Runner's to be "perfectly grand," supplementing the remark by a half-expressed wish to meet him; at which Mr. Jenkinsby scowled a little and told her of the smiles which a certain soubrette playing in a ten-twenty-thirty musical-comedy house had cast upon him, Jenkinsby, while he sat in the first row witnessing the performance. Mutual recriminations at once began after this recital of unfaithfulness, which ended, as they always did, in much osculation and embracing; after which Mr. Jenkinsby looked at his gold-plated watch, found the hour to be ten, and after more of the conduct indulged in by lovers of their ilk, left her and the house and started for home.

II

MR. JENKINSBY'S usual route home was four blocks down Lexington street, turning off at Calhoun street, on which he lived; but so absorbed had he become in contemplation of certain proceedings that he passed Calhoun street without noticing the fact.

A girl was walking very rapidly, half a block in front of him, and, steadily in her wake, followed another

young man, likewise in a "swagger" fawn-colored overcoat. "For some time the pursuer hesitated about speaking to the girl; but presently he summoned up courage and stepped to her side. The girl continued on her rapid pace, apparently oblivious of the venturesome young man; but after a block had been traversed, she paused and addressed him, starting off again, but still pursued. Then, for the second time, she stopped.

This was the reason Mr. Jenkinsby forgot Calhoun street. He saw at once that the attentions of the other fawn-coated youth were not pleasing to the girl; and memories of heroic avengements of such insults portrayed on the stage of the cheap theatre caused Mr. Jenkinsby to quicken his footsteps. When he arrived on the scene of action the girl was speaking, each word a minute icicle.

"I shall wait here until a policeman comes, and then give you in charge," was her ultimatum.

"Aw, go on!" returned her would-be acquaintance, cocking his derby to one side and thrusting his hands into his overcoat pockets. "You're only kiddin' now. I say, cut it out. Say, what'm I doin', hey? Streets are free, ain't they?"

This was Mr. Jenkinsby's cue—as good a one as any manufacturer of melodramas could have offered. He stepped up.

"You go along about your business," was his remark, "and let this young lady alone—see?"

The other fawn-coated one scowled and squared off pugnaciously. "Say, what license you got to butt in?" he inquired acidly.

"That right!" returned Mr. Jenkinsby with a fine appreciation of the repartee as he capped the two words with a "swift punch in the jaw." The other young man went down like a decayed tree in a wind-storm, and rose, half-dazed, but with enough of his wits left to perceive the approach of a policeman and to realize that dire results would follow his remaining on that particular spot. So, with neither

word nor deed, but holding his jaw with some solicitude, he fled incontinently.

The girl, who had moved a few steps away during the encounter, now approached Jenkinsby and held out a very small hand, brown-gloved. "Thank you, so much," she said sweetly.

Mr. Jenkinsby surveyed her and was suddenly reduced to awkwardness. "Oh, it's nothin'," he disclaimed. There was something about the girl which forbade that he use any of his time-worn pleasantries. "Oh, it's nothin'," he mumbled for a second time, and looked away from the girl he had defended.

Subconsciously he was aware of the fact that he had never known a girl exactly like this one. He felt no assurance when her green-blue eyes were turned on him. It seemed as though she were laughing at him; and yet her face was grave. Although he could not have put the distinction into words, he knew, instinctively, that there was a difference between this girl and the ones that he knew. There was something about her—an indefinable something—which made the term of "lady" inapplicable and grotesque when applied to her, after it had served a similar purpose with Miss Celia Boggers. From the tips of her boots to the plume of her toque she was the perfectly gowned, perfectly self-possessed, and healthily pretty girl who is a power within herself and looks out upon the world with calm, unwavering gaze. Tom Jenkinsby did not know her kind, but he felt all that one, knowing her, might describe.

His feelings were shown in his actions. He stood before her awaiting her words. His attitude seemed strangely awkward to him, and his hands looked clumsy. He wrenched himself to a stiffly erect position, and lifted his hat again.

"Glad to have been of any assistance to you," he blurted out. "Good night, miss."

He had turned his back and taken

several steps in the opposite direction when her words recalled him. "Wait a moment, please."

Mentally catechizing, he thought of a silver bell with a golden clapper as producing a note akin to the melody of her voice. He turned and moved toward her again, but he was too oppressed by a sense of embarrassment to ask her why she had called.

"I am going to ask you to walk along with me—will you? I want you to do me a favor——"

"Anything that I can do," he began eagerly, but his self-confidence faded away before he reached the end of the sentence, "I shall be glad to do," he finished indistinctly.

"I've just been up to see my old nurse. She's been ill. I came alone because I didn't want to drag a man into the uninteresting atmosphere of a sick-room; and I had so much to say to dear old nurse." Her voice was very soft here. "Such a dear!" She cut herself off suddenly, noting that Tom was about to throw away his cigar. "Oh, go on smoking, please. I don't mind—really."

Tom stared mutely. It was a new experience to be allowed to smoke in the presence of a girl. Celia Boggers and her friends did not consider it "respectable." And this girl, so far her— He checked himself suddenly before he allowed the unfaithful thought to take form. Then, too, the girl was speaking.

"I want you to get me a cab somewhere—will you? I don't know this part of town very well——"

Tom's fingers worked nervously with his gloves. "I don't think you can get one up this way. You see, there ain't much use for carriages up here, 'cept for weddin's and funerals and—such things and——"

"I can't get one, you mean?" She regarded him with reproach. "Really?"

He nodded with emphasis.

"What shall I do?" she inquired introspectively, leaving Tom out of it altogether. But Tom took it upon himself to suggest what had come suddenly to him.

"Why not take the street-cars?" he wished to know.

A faint smile lighted up the corners of her mouth and the light of laughter shone in her eyes. "It's really too ridiculous," she returned. "But I've mislaid my purse—I had it when I came out because I rode here on the cars. You see, I could pay the cabman when I got home; but the cars——"

She paused for a moment. Tom's face brightened, only to cloud again. The solution of her difficulty had suggested itself; but he was afraid that an offer of assistance might be taken in the same spirit by her as the advances of the other young man with the fawn-colored coat. Finally, he took firm hold of himself and choked back his faltering.

"May I," he blurted out, "may I see you home?—on the cars, of course——"

"Yes," the girl said gravely, "if you will be so kind."

"Oh, no kindness at all!" he stammered. "No kindness—" He checked himself again. "We turn down here to Fayette and take the cars——"

"To Baltimore, if you please; and transfer to Charles——"

Tom had too much fear for the loss of her respect to give her the re-hashed vaudeville; and, somehow, he realized that the plot of the melodrama which he had seen would not interest this girl. There came a sudden realization to him that the play was absurd.

He lost himself in meditation for the time necessary to reach the car and be seated; and the girl felt that she should enliven the journey. So she began to talk, and Tom, awakened out of his introspection, flushed guiltily and realized his awkwardness again.

As she talked, he was conscious that she did it with an effort—an effort to interest him by coming down to his level. She chose a book of the hour, containing a much-discussed problem as the topic; she found in a moment or two that he had not only failed to read it, but had evidently never heard

of it. Casting about in her mind for another topic, she made some comments on the much-discussed *chef d'œuvre* of Wagner which had aroused dissension; the name of this he had heard, but the subject was new to him.

She abandoned Wagner then and began to tell him a story which had been related to her by an artist. She forgot, until she was nearing the climax, that an appreciation of the story presupposed a knowledge of Gallic art; and she broke off in the telling by a reference to the fact that Charles street was near. When they had changed cars, she began to talk of horses and dogs, only to find that he did not ride and that he had never owned a canine and took no interest in them. Thoroughly despairing, she tried to get him to talk of himself. She had never before met anyone just like him, and she was curious as to what manner of man he might be.

But on the topic of himself, Tom Jenkinsby was very non-committal. The fact that he had risen from messenger to file-and-index clerk—whatever that may be—in seven years, had a bank-account and was going to marry the daughter of a prominent plumber, well-known in society circles of the West End, did not seem to be the sort of information about himself which he would have this girl know. Everything concerning his own life seemed inartistic, petty, and not worth consideration in the presence of this lovely being with the green-blue eyes, and the healthy, ruddy tan of the woman who lives outdoors much of her time and measures things by the standard of a great and beautiful Nature. Without knowing it, the girl had reduced the man to almost terrified silence. He did not wish her to think him as petty as he was, and he realized that silence was his only refuge.

With a sigh of relief, the girl noted the broad shoulders and pleasant face of a man in a long loose coat, black muffler and silk hat, who had just entered the car; and she bestowed upon him a smile which had in it so much

of regard that the man was somehow astonished. He did not show it, however, but sat down on the other side of her and called her by name. For half a second, perhaps, his eyes measured Jenkinsby almost incredulously; then, with a half-subdued smile, he said something unimportant to the girl.

"This is Mr. Hungerford," she said, turning from her new companion to Tom. "Mr. Jenkinsby."

Hungerford bowed, but Tom, true to preconceived ideas of etiquette, thrust out his hand after hastily peeling off the glove.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Hungerford," he said.

The other took the extended hand and shook it with every appearance of heartiness. Tom did not notice that he stifled a smile. Hungerford chatted on with the girl, well-bred and amusing in all he said, and Tom noted the difference between the cut of his own coat and that of Hungerford's; the different way in which Hungerford's hair was cut; and the fact that his well-formed hands had on their fingers no rings whatever.

At Chase street, the girl touched Jenkinsby's arm. "We get off here," she informed him; then to Hungerford: "I'm very hungry. I didn't eat much at dinner, I was so worried about nurse. And so I'm going to ask you and Mr. Jenkinsby to come in and have a little midnight repast. I'm only asking you, Gerry, because you can make such a perfect rabbit; and Molly gave me a chafing-dish set which hasn't been touched yet and which simply cries out to be used."

III

JENKINSBY had told the girl that he "had better be getting along," when the trio stopped before the winding steps and arched entrance of a large house in the centre of the fashionable district.

There were two Tom Jenkinsbys when the tentative non-acceptance of

the invitation was given. The Tom Jenkinsby that refused was the manly Tom who felt his inappropriateness and realized that he was being asked only because the girl's good-breeding demanded that she should show some convincing recognition of her appreciation for his timely assistance. The second Tom Jenkinsby was the one in which West Baltimore had not disappeared; the Jenkinsby who wished to be able to say truthfully that he had been a welcome guest within the mansions of the elect and to describe such an interior to his associates of the West End, who, while pretending to scorn those of the "society" world, worshiped secretly. And the first Tom Jenkinsby being only just awakened to a realization of himself was the weaker of the two, for the second Tom had lived twenty-two years. So he took back his refusal and ascended the winding steps, following the girl and her companion into the long, wide hall, and into the smoking-room, which was just off the morning-room in which the girl proposed that the little feast should be held.

"Everybody's either out or in bed—the servants, too," she whispered gleefully. "So we'll have the place entirely to ourselves. Isn't it fun to get one's food, Gerry? And, oh, Mr. Jenkinsby, won't you wait in the smoking-room until Mr. Hungerford and I have started with the preparations? Thank you. You'll find cigars and cigarettes in that little closet there—and there's some whisky and a siphon in that other one over there. Now, just for a moment, if you'll excuse us."

He acceded dully, and they left him in the dim light of a Flemish lantern. He lit a cigarette and took several perfunctory puffs at it, then forgot it was in his hand. As one half-awake, he examined the quaint wood panels with the burned mottoes; the solid, comfortable chairs; the cordovan leather pillows, the odd steins, the Flemish pottery, and the Japanese swords. There was a general air of artistic comfort about the place which

pervaded everything. He felt, somehow, that he had wanted all this at some time, remembered that he had been vaguely discontented and knew not why. But it was disquieting mentally when the realization was forced upon him that here he should feel a sense of unfitness when all was as he would have had it and there was no room for improvement.

With a shudder he recalled the starkly colored chromos in white frames, the crayon portraits in tarnished gilt, and the bisque ornaments of the Boggerses' parlor. He remembered with a start, however, that such as was the Boggerses', so were all the homes that he knew. He had never been out of that element before.

He got up, one hand still in his trousers pocket, the two fingers of the other holding the cigarette which was steadily burning itself away unnoticed; then he sat down again, forgetting this time to pull up his trousers to avoid bagginess at the knees. His clothes—his "Sunday" clothes in which he stood arrayed—had suddenly vanished from his mental perspective.

With the strange unquiet on him, he rose again, pacing the smoking-room. Unconsciously, he moved out into the little inside hall which separated the smoking-room from the morning-room. There was a Moorish corner in the hall. He seated himself there, abstractedly.

The door nearby was slightly ajar; and the even, musical tones of the girl came to his ears. How quiet, how restful was a voice like that! No undue nasal enunciation, no high pitch at the beginning of a sentence and indistinct, hasty, garbled finish such as Celia—again his unfaithfulness smote him.

In his endeavor to avoid comparison, his ears became conscious that the words spoken were audible—and so he heard.

She had just concluded the telling of something; and they were both laughing a little.

"You find close-range study of the other-half interesting, then?" It was

Hungerford's voice. "On terms of equality, I mean."

"Now, Gerry, that's unworthy of you. He isn't one of that kind—the kind we found missions for—and reclaim and all that sort of thing——"

"No—he isn't. That's the trouble. If he were frankly coarse—the stepping-stone—half and half—between the mission kind and. . . . He's a mechanic or something, I guess. Maybe he's a clerk. There's a directory here. What's his name?"

"Here's his card."

"Printed, on my word!—'Mr. Thomas Jenkinsby'—fancy! a printed visiting-card! Oh, I don't mean anything—just to worry you a little." Hungerford's voice was plainly merry.

The girl spoke as though a trifle troubled. "He acted as well as anyone could have done—as well as you, Gerry Hungerford. . . . No, don't pour it out yet. You're forgetting——"

"No, I'm not. Well, perhaps he did. But I shouldn't have come in. Give me some credit." There was a sound as though of scampering. "I suppose you'll have your mother meet him when he makes his party-call——"

The girl's voice showed extreme indignation. "Gerald Hungerford, you are horrid. Imagine!"

Rapidly, Tom Jenkinsby gathered together his hat, coat and gloves;

stealthily and noiselessly he tiptoed down the hall and opened the door with cautious quiet. He only remembered to put on his hat when he had walked halfway down the block. Then he felt a sharp pain in the fingers of his hand and found that the cigarette was burning into his flesh. He dropped it.

No, it would never do to meet her mother, and shame the girl. And he should not have gone in the house, "except by the servants' entrance," he muttered bitterly, some fragments of a book he had read recurring to his memory. He was not fit——

He paused in his walk, and slowly and deliberately put on his coat and gloves. He stood quite still for a short space of time; then he uttered a half-choking sound, a cross between a sob and a laugh.

"I'll be damned if I——"

He mentally said the rest, but the mental speech was as determined as the first words of it spoken. He stepped into a nearby saloon and haughtily demanded a drink. There was no friendliness in his tone as he addressed the bartender. He poured out a large portion of whisky, drank it without blinking, and stalked moodily into the street again.

"I guess Celia is good enough for me," he ruminated as he strode homeward. "Yes, I guess Celia's good enough for me!"



THE USUAL THING

"HE is such a big-hearted chap!"
"Great Scott! Is he as ill-bred as all that?"



A WOMAN'S head is not always turned by flattery; sometimes peroxide is responsible.

THE GREAT PERHAPS

By Marion Hill

THEIR widely different way of looking at things was made manifest the very hour when, alone together, they first entered their little house.

"I bid you welcome—home," said David Gilman.

The meager words so ill expressed his abounding emotion that disdain of them caused him to utter them huskily and without special conviction; but the battling rapture of his heart sent the blood reddening to his temples and brought a sudden choking to his throat. She was here at last—his.

"Ah, 'be it ever so humble'!" quoted Dicentra laughingly, and not very impressed as she glanced lightly around her. "This is ever so humble, is it not? consequently there's no place like it. That reminds me, here is the motto of the henpecked man: 'There's no place like home, *thank God!*'"

She spoke, as always, with a scintillating rapidity that gave an air, wholly specious, of brilliancy to her words. Her ready laughter, soft, mockingly mirthful and infectious, helped the impression.

Gilman, who was slow of wit and unready of speech, was usually content to admire unreservedly all that she might say; but at this he caught her hand dissuadingly.

"Dicentra," he begged, "do not try to hide the tender thoughts of your heart. I know its beauty better than you do yourself. And if to me—crude and uneducated as I am—this homecoming is something almost too holy for speech, how far more must it be beautiful to you who are so above me, so delicate, so refined——"

"Refined makes me think of kerosene oil or pure family lard," she interrupted. "Am awfully sorry to disappoint you, Dave, about these imaginary mental gifts of mine—sentiments and things—but honestly, I don't feel a thrill as yet. The recent chattering-act of the minister pronouncing us man and wife has thus far failed to overwhelm me with its significance. His last quavering 'Amen' is still sticking to my hair, like cigar-smoke, but for all that I do not in the least feel married, do you?"

Bewildered, he looked at her with anxiety to see how much or how little of truth was behind her flippancy. Not feel married? Why, *he* was awed yet with the terrible solemnity of the words which had united them, shaken to the heart's core with his realization of their sacred responsibilities, thrilling with the overmastering happiness which had come to him when she had turned to him, his wife, and he had kissed her. Not feel married——

"You have more self-control, more reserve than I have," he said at length.

"Oh, you disparage yourself! Your control is far more magnificent than mine and your reserve transcends even conventionality—for you have not yet invited me to take off my hat or put down my suit-case."

She shot him a glance, impertinently sweet. He had always taken such glances happily and affectionately, but now he doubted that they were just in place, and his pride was troubled.

"Why, this is your home," he protested, hurt.

She dropped her valise, flung aside her hat, ran to him shyly and took his

large hand in her small ones, twining and untwining his fingers in lieu of giving him any warmer caress.

"Dave dear, surely you don't want me to be sentimental! Aren't you too middle-aged for that?"

He crushed her suddenly to his heart and drew her down beside him upon a lounge.

"Talk to me, talk to me," he said brokenly. "Say anything you like, in any way, only talk. I have waited so long for this hour."

She withdrew herself slightly from him and smoothed her possibly ruffled hair.

"You talk to me, instead," she suggested airily, "and the first thing for you to say is immediately to contradict me for calling myself middle-aged. I am nothing of the sort, am I? Thirty is young, positively cal-low, nowadays."

Her small prettiness, her glittering rush of words, her charming laugh, fascinated him to adoration.

"What makes you love me? Why did you marry me?" he asked almost fiercely. "I want to know."

"And so do I! You are not at all my sort of man."

"What is?"

"Oh, I like them slim, and you are fat; I adore dark men, and you are blue-eyed and fuzzy-haired; I admire diplomacy and polish, and you are woefully brusque. I absolutely demand culture, and—and——"

"And I am uncultured! Go on! Say it!"

"Hush!" she said, shrinking. "You can be emphatic without—bellowing."

He winced as if she had struck him, then said generously:

"That is right, dear—teach me to be worthy of you, to be a gentleman."

"You are one," she cried sharply. "I could not love a man who was not."

"What makes you love me?" he persisted. "I am not rich, not over-young, not handsome; you were self-supporting, were not lonely—what makes you love me?"

"Perhaps I don't," she suggested banteringly.

He flung away her hands and hid his face upon the back of the lounge.

"Good gracious, but you are emotional!" she criticized, obviously entertained by the exhibition. Then she knelt beside him and gently replaced her hands within his own. "Your questions are not easy to answer. I'll prove it to you—what makes you love me?"

He held her away that he might look the more steadfastly into her eyes.

"I love you because you are you and I am I," he said with passionate earnestness. "Because you are everything that I am not, consequently you are my other half; because you are also everything that I am, and so you are the mate that God has made for me. I love you because you can make life happier for me and because I can make life happier for you. I love you because you are starving for it, even though you may not know it. I love you for trivial, trivial things—because you are small and sweet, because your voice is pretty, because you can play the piano, because you know such a lot about books, because you are a woman, because you can give me what I long for in the way of companionship and tenderness and refinement——"

"There's the lard again," she interjected nervously.

"You will not put me off! I love you because through you I hope to reach the best things in life for us both. I will aim high. Together we shall show the world how to be happy just by being ourselves happy—for we will be happy, shall we not?"

The sense flew past her, but the words rankled.

"Dave, Dave!" she cried, aghast, "are you *trying* to mix your shalls and wills?"

"My shalls and wills?" he repeated blankly.

"Never mind." There was a note of shocked weariness in her voice as she added, laughing hysterically, "A good thing that I have been a school-teacher."

"Why?"

"I said 'Never mind.'"

"But don't you think that we have a better chance for happiness than most couples?"

"Have we?"

"Have we not? You see, we are neither of us in our first youth, we have no romantic illusions——"

"Better for us if we had; married bliss is at best—*un grand peut-être*."

"What's that?"

"From the old saying, you know: '*Je m'en vais chercher un grand peut-être. Il est au nid de la pie.*'"

"But what is it?"

"Oh, I keep forgetting that you do not understand French. That necessary tongue! How do you get along without it?"

"What do I want it for?"

"Chiefly to say prettily things that aren't pretty."

"Translate your saying."

She arched her eyebrows quizzically as if she found his ignorance immense enough to be humorous. She put her proverb into English:

"I am journeying to find a great perhaps. It is in the nest of a magpie."

David Gilman looked more than ever puzzled.

"You'll have to translate your translation," he said.

"A great perhaps—does not that appeal to you as a perfect synonym for 'married happiness'? It does to me, deliciously."

"What has 'the nest of a magpie' to do with it?"

"Everything in the world. For she builds it——"

"Where?"

"Always out of reach."

Her volatile, musical laugh cleared the distrust from his face. He resolved to let her take her own time about dropping all the defensive little affectations of speech which during courtship had perhaps been wiser than too much earnestness. Very likely it was stupid in him to expect immediate tenderness.

Divining something of his disappointment and willing to change his thought, she said with challenging derision:

"You have glib enough reasons for loving me, but why did you marry me?"

The blood rioted into his sensitive face, then receded, leaving him pale. Too true in every fiber of his being to match her superficial quips in like kind, he labored with touching sincerity to form a logical, convincing answer.

"Dicentra, wife, part of the reason is too sacred for speech, we must live it together, dear, heart to heart, soul to soul, growing in nobility and unselfishness as it all comes to us. But I can speak this much: I am buffeted of the world, sweetheart, and very home-hungry. This little house, confined and humble as it seems to you, is wide as heaven to me. A man's home is his all. Work, for self alone, is barren of reward. I have grown to disgust of it. But to work for a wife, for the happiness of home, for the sake of keeping the loved ones shrined and safe——"

"Ones?" queried Dicentra nonchalantly. "Isn't *one* too much? How many wives do you intend to have?"

Her wedding-ring was too large for her slender hand and she was fitting it triumphantly upon her thumb and did not see his swift look of apologetic dismay, of pained wonderment. He resumed as evenly as if there had been no interruption.

"Not the least reason of all, I married my clever little girl that she might be freed from the necessity of toiling for her livelihood and given the opportunity to make her name an honored one in the literary world."

At last he had touched a topic which appeared to her to be worth her sincerity of interest. Her face glowed immediately and a wistful brilliance gleamed in her eyes.

"You are the soul of truth," she cried, flinging herself impulsively but impersonally into his arms. "Tell me, do you think I am gifted enough ever to do good things with my pen? If not, my life will be nothing but failure and bitterness. I would rather die at once than to struggle along and never be able to write anything really worth

while. What do you think of my work so far? Be honest."

"Why, I've told you loads of times, dear. I think it's all right," he said with slow conviction. "You showed me something of yours once in a magazine and it seemed as good as anything else there. All that you want is plenty of leisure and quiet surroundings, to become as famous an author as any living. I mean it."

"Oh, David, how you comfort and strengthen me," she said, freeing herself immediately from him to pace eagerly up and down the narrow room. "I want to believe that you are right. I half do. That is why I am so horribly afraid of all this." She flung out her arms to indicate the tiny house. "I am not domestic. I hate housekeeping and housework. I am not strong enough for it. It kills inspiration. I loathe cooking and darning and saving and scraping. I know that we are not rich, and that I'll have to do such things. Have patience if I do them badly and half-heartedly."

"Why, sure, sure," he promised. Then he flushed contritely, remembering certain educational lectures of hers, and said, though with less spontaneous manliness: "Surely, surely."

"What better start can I make in my new wifely 'duties' than by getting at my desk and to work upon my story?" she asked yearningly. "It may look a little selfish to go off by myself, but, after all, from now on my successes will also be yours, in a way. Will they not? Oh, help me to be of some account in the field of letters. Help me."

His eyes filled with sudden, strange moisture and he grasped both her hands in a loyal grip.

"Dicentra, my life as well as my love is for your dear service."

"Well, then, come on and oil my typewriter," she said laughing, and becoming exaggeratedly gay. "I can't be 'spoony,' and I'm no home-maker, but I'll write stories for you; will that do?"

"Looks as if it might have to," he answered good-humoredly, as he con-

ducted her to her little "den," which he had happily prepared for her. He hoped that she would spare the time to note separately the many loving touches he had arranged for her pleasure—the flowering plant on the window-sill, the file for her letters, the cushioned hearth-seat, the violets on her desk, her old, well-beloved books on their newly varnished shelf, even an incongruous little gift of bottled perfume on the centre-table; but she had thoughts only for her manuscript and her work, at which she settled herself at once and with a dismissing preoccupation. It was rather lonely for him, had he chosen to think so, but he did not.

From that time forward he schooled himself to efface his dominant individuality and fit his moods to hers. He let the rattle of the typewriter, the rustle of the manuscript, take the place of music from the upright piano and the old guitar which, at distressing expense to himself, he had bought for her entertainment, and he patiently bided his time, secure in the knowledge that her womanliness and wifeliness would break at last from their bonds of repression, and prove the crowning radiant wealth of his lacking little home.

"When I have once tasted of Success, found myself capable of it, I'll drop the whole thing for a while and give poor, pathetic you some highly necessary attention," she often promised, and as often he believed her.

In the meantime he did his own work and much of hers too. She was right in accusing herself of undomesticity. The tidy little box of a house would often have approached slovenliness if he had not delighted to look after it in the evening. To save her strength and her time, he would sweep, dust and rearrange, and all with the deft, artistic touch of capability and thoroughness.

"This is not man's work," she would sometimes contritely say, with guilty, futile snatches at the broom-handle.

"Whatever lightens the labor of woman is work for man," he would in-

sist with kind stolidity; and in the end she would let him have his way.

But in spite of his cheery determination and desire to help her in her chosen profession, he could not keep from wondering why she, too, did not find absorbing interest in making cozy their quiet nest, how she could let a plant languish for want of trifling care, let flowers wither for lack of water, why she did not sew—as seems the general way of women—what consolation there was in literary work sufficiently to take the place of the thousand and one inconsequential, feminine, alluring things with which other women busied themselves. One evening he asked her:

“Don’t think I’m hinting a complaint, Dicentra, it’s just sheer curiosity that prompts the question, but how is your ‘success’ to repay you and me for the long evenings of companionship lost to us both while you are so wearying your dear self with work and worry? What is success? How are you to benefit by it? What do you want it for?”

She put aside her writing at once and came to his side. She was ever punctiliously careful not to show annoyance when interrupted. She leaned on the arm of the hearth-seat where he was, and twisted a lock of his hair while they talked. The rare, soft touch filled him with love and loneliness. Were it not that she always seemed to feel shy and worried at any warm demonstration of affection from him, he would have drawn her to him and held her in his arms like a cherished child. At the thought, or rather at the cognate thought of an actual child of his own, his and hers, his big heart throbbed to bursting in anticipative ecstasy. The coming years must surely hold that glory for them both, success or no.

“David, imagine these two pictures: think of me, first, as a faded housewife, old, wrinkled, stubbly of hand, bent of back, gossiping with my neighbors about recipes, selling cookies to help raise the church debt, retailing choice scandal, begging calico scraps for

hideous patchwork quilts, working all day like a servant, tumbling to sleep at night like a tired animal—is this all that a woman’s work ought to bring her? Wouldn’t you like rather to see me, old perhaps, but gracious, famous, well-to-do, sought after by clever people, polished and brilliant from intimate converse with them, my books in all hands, my photographs in the literary magazines, my name a synonym for cleverness and charm of style, my pen an instrument of power for the furtherance of humanity’s welfare even through the slight medium of novels and stories? Can you wonder for a moment that I hesitate between the two?”

“But—but——”

He was afraid to say it. Even to himself, the petty pleasures of house-keeping, the rocking of a cradle, seemed inadequate exchange to offer just then for a brilliant literary career.

She kissed his lock of hair, replaced it methodically, patted it smooth, then moved as if to take up her work again. He caught and retained her slender fingers.

“Dicentra——!”

“David!”

“Do you love me?”

It was no bashful badinage of a swain; it was the slow, puzzled query, full-freighted with meaning, of a thoughtful man. Interested, she gave him an answer as serious as her nature allowed.

“I think I must.”

His clasp relaxed and her hand dropped to her side.

“You ‘think’!”

“Don’t gibe, David. I love you. I love you because you are real.”

“Real?”

“Yes. I can hardly explain. But you attract me because you are primitive. You laugh when you are amused, storm when you are angered, do what suits you, eat when you are hungry, go to sleep when you are tired.”

“Who does not?”

“I, for one. I laugh when I dare not cry, flatter and coax when I am

angry (the 'madder' the more blarney), I do what I am allowed, I eat when other people set an eating hour, when tired I lie awake, and sleep when I get rested. You are not complex. You do not worry me. I can't help but love you. You are like a big tree. You grow in the sunlight, but you make a shady place for those who need shade. You take life as if it belonged to you. I never seem to belong anywhere. I always feel as unreal as a personage in a play. I am interested and worried in the development of the plot and certain situations, but always from the outside, as an onlooker. Nothing seems to matter, or to be worth while, or really to *be* at all. You plan for next year. I doubt the next hour. You never seem to doubt, or fear anything. You are positively placid. That comes of being fat. Fat people are soothingly bovine. You sit here night after night smoking, reading, listening to my clatter, and looking as blissful as Buddha. What is your idea of happiness?"

"To be in the room with you, to hear your voice, to see you happy, to feel your influence in my life, and to hope——"

"To hope——?"

"Nothing."

Again he dared not speak. His reply arousing no curiosity, set her off into delightful laughter.

"Wise man—to hope nothing! 'Nothing comes from nothing.' And, oh, dear! nothing will come from me either, unless I keep at my work."

She reseated herself at the desk and soon her fingers were flying over the keys while an alert anxiety brightened her face.

When he had brought himself to satisfaction in watching her tense enjoyment, in planning new things for her comfort, he would get up and busy himself in home carpentry—fashioning shelves and boxes and corner cupboards, working deftly and hopefully, imagining in spite of himself that a brood of nestlings twittered at his feet and spurred him on. When summer evenings came and lent him

their long light, he would forget his loneliness by busying himself in the small garden—that sweet, green nook, fenced in from the road; ideal for the straying and playing of little feet; and when darkness fell, he would go quietly to his wife's den, seeking comradeship in her mere nearness, while he leaned against the window and looked hopefully into the future.

Once, looking up, she caught a longing in his eyes, a terribly intense yearning. It smote her with a sort of reproach and pain, and she pushed away her papers and joined him at the casement.

"What do you see out there?" she asked, gently mocking and gay.

"Our little children, Dicentra."

"Our little children!" she echoed amazedly. "What little children?"

"The tiny ones to come. Don't you, too, keep hoping that they will soon make their journey to us and give us our life's work, fittingly fill our empty hands with the sweetness of their care?"

She gazed at him, first without perfect comprehension, next with a shocked shyness, finally with a sort of horror of resolve.

"Oh, listen to me; stop!" she cried.

"I thought we were both too sensible and reserved ever to be forced to this discussion, but now that it has come, let us argue it out and be done with it. How old are you?"

"Forty."

"And I am over thirty. Suppose the years brought us offspring, when they were in their twenties we would be old, decrepit, grandparents to our own children! How pitiful a situation! Another thing—we are poor. Have we money sufficient for even our own needs?"

"No."

"We don't really suffer for anything, because we are mature enough not to want what we can't possibly get. But how could we bear to see a child, a baby, suffering for things beyond our power to procure? Could you stand it?"

"No—but——"

"Wait! The last is the worst—I hate children! I do, I do! It is born in me. It is not my fault. Why should the admission be thought unwomanly, unnatural, monstrous? Some women loathe roses—some, violets—they don't know why, they just do—and no one shrinks from them. I hate children. There! Despise me if you will. I have never kissed a child in my life, or held a baby."

She was crying wretchedly by now, and he who had never seen her so give way, was shielding her in his arms and trying to comfort her.

"Hush! Forget this talk. Don't wring my heart by crying."

"I should never have married you. I wish I had not!"

"Dicentra!"

"I'm not the sort to bring you happiness. You said, when you made me marry you, that you wanted nothing but my companionship, that I could make your life happy by just letting you work for me; but you were mistaken. You need a big, strong, motherly, capable housewife, who likes to cook and sew and take care of babies—it is all noble and beautiful, I am not decrying it. But you were cruel in letting me believe otherwise. As like as not, you place the cruelty to my account. You probably feel that you are yoked to a cheat and an impostor——"

"Dicentra, be silent. You are the one, the only woman in this whole wide world for me, and you know it even while you are talking wildly."

"David, before God, speak the truth—can I alone, by myself, fill the longing of your heart?"

"You can, if you will, if you will!"

"Be compassionate and patient a little longer. Maybe I'll learn in time to be a better wife to you. I don't believe I've yet sewn a button on a thing, have I?"

His mode of thought was too far-seeing, too dependable, for him ever to be able to follow her immediately in her capricious changes, so he made no reply except to lead her to her desk. He felt that occupation would be the

surest means of bringing back to both of them their self-control. She fumbled with her notes and pencils, pitiaibly vacillating. Then she lowered her head on her arm and again fell to weeping.

Between them a fragile but beautiful bond had broken. Neither was dense enough not to know it. Of the two, she was at the moment the most lacking in perception; she failed to realize that her tears were the anguish-stricken accompaniment to an unspoken but most palpable confession—her renunciation of family cares was a voluntary, determined, unregretted sacrifice, made upon the insatiable altar of her ambition.

Too true, too honorable to attempt the unworthy comfort of evasive speech he silently kissed her and left her to her thoughts.

However, it was not long before Dicentra reestablished the normal between them. It is the priceless blessing of self-consciousness, rather than of absorbing earnestness, to be able to put a good face upon a menacing situation.

He, too, was always thankful for peace. Except that his eyes thereafter held an abiding sadness of disappointment, he never blamed her, nor held her in less esteem, nor let her lack in smallest measure his unselfishly tender devotion. He was not a little touched and troubled by her succeeding attempts at house-government. She went prodigiously into caps and aprons and tired herself distressfully by too much sweeping and cooking. His wardrobe improved. He found buttons in place of gaps, and seams where slits had been; but he so truly realized her well-hidden sense of martyrdom that he could find no pleasure in being ministered to. In spite of her Spartan-like deception of song and smiles, he felt that her submission to duty's routine was as heartbreaking as the frantic gaiety of a squirrel in a gilded treadmill.

Often in the midst of some whirl of domesticity, she would apparently let her mind wander away through the

happy mazes of a story-plot. Her eyes would stare steadily into space. She seemed to have her most stable existence in unreality, and whenever she came dreamily back to the actual world and dropped him a pretty, artificial little word now and then, it was as if she stepped before a curtain and repeated the lines of a part.

He noticed, too, that although she was completely free from taint of theatricality, she, nevertheless, did her best for an audience, be that audience merely a business friend of his dropping in for a chat. At such times Dicentra would exert herself to talk well. On occasion she could be immensely funny. Her eyes would shine, her face become glorified and girlish, and her harmlessly ironical wit would flash around like lightning. She was a favorite with Gilman's friends. When they went, she would drop back again into the gentle apathy which was becoming her habit. So plainly irksome to her was all life outside of her literary one that David himself felt called upon to suggest her return to it.

"Are you discouraged or 'stuck' in your story, Dicentra?" he asked.

"Story?" she scoffed amiably. "Why, I've dozens of them, all going on in my head at once."

"Stories, then."

"'Stuck' is the right word, I guess," she admitted disconsolately.

"What is the cause?"

"Oh, I don't exactly know. Competition is the life of all trade, even the trade of letters, and this is a poky little town; there's not even a library where one can skim over the current magazines."

"Magazines." His big, fair face lit up immediately. "I'll keep you supplied with the whole bunch of them."

"They cost like sin," was her gloomy reminder.

"I've always wanted an incentive to give up smoking, and here's the best yet. You shall have your magazines."

Unusual tears dimmed her eyes.

"I wish you weren't so good," she cried miserably. "Don't ask me what's

the matter. There's nothing. I'm going to toil like a Trojan."

The time that followed was a delight and satisfaction to them both. Her work began to find place with the best editors, and many a small cheque—"brain-money," as she called it—helped out their income.

"We lived on a sonnet all last week," she once triumphantly informed him. "Pray that I may accomplish an ode or a novelette, and we'll live like lords for a month."

She was always ingenuously insistent that he should accept the "brain-money."

"It exonerates me," she confessed. "I'm such a *slouch* of a wife, darling, that you'll ease my conscience awfully if you let me feel that I'm doing a little to lighten your load."

Her irresponsible joyousness was sunshine to him.

"Dicentra, you're as pretty as a picture when you are glad," he said simply.

She promptly dropped back into neglect of the house, and was laughingly brazen about it.

"David, wouldn't I be a 'non compos' if I wasted hours over darning socks or making my own shirt-waists, when by a proper use of the time I could earn enough 'plunks' to buy socks and waists to burn? Is my lord in need of a necktie? Ho, within there! Bring hither the ink. Then I'll dash off a quatrain, go down street, and on the fair morrow send home neckgear by the drayful. Don't dare say 'broom' or 'frying-pan' to a gifted thing like me."

Her good fortune fluctuated. With monotonous regularity her stories and verse began to come back to her—"unavailable." Battling with frenzy against defeat, she wore herself into a nervous wreck.

"Better call a halt, dear," he suggested, when she took to writing all night long.

"A halt means death!" she cried. "Don't you know that there are millions ready to jump into my place over my dead body!"

He smiled. He thought she was joking. When he appreciated the genuineness of her agony he attempted the antidote of common sense.

"Suppose you are 'written out,' as you call it? Suppose you never do succeed in having another line published, what earthly difference does it make? Let someone else have the crown, you are already queen enough for me. Leave the laurels on the windy mountain-top—if that's where they grow—and come into the sunlight of our dear little garden, and tend a bed of heart's-ease and mignonette. Don't forget, either, that you have promised to take me in hand some time. I've waited pretty long, Dicentra. Chuck it, little girl."

She flung him a look of displeasure.

"I—I—I heard you say 'chuck' once," he stammered, red as a school-boy.

She went off into an irrepressible gurggle of laughter, and resumed her work.

Failure followed failure. A tangible gloom settled over them both. The rejection of her work was ruination to her, and to him also. She did not, of course, vent her chagrin upon him by any discourtesy of speech, or act—she was too conventionally gentle for that, but she gave way to a terrible moodiness and despair which were fully as disastrous so far as their happiness was concerned.

An inexplicable estrangement grew between them. Her poignant discontent seemed to accuse him of something, he knew not what.

After weeks of silence and separation she made an appeal to him. It was midnight. She crept into his room and stood irresolutely at the bedside.

"Are you awake, David?"

"Am I not likely to be, Dicentra?"

"May I kneel down beside you and take hold of your hand and think something all out to a finish?"

"Why do you ask that which is your right?"

"I've been so selfish that I've no 'rights' left."

He put out his hand and she grasped it tremblingly. She sank to her knees and laid her head against him.

"David, I don't want to talk or to be talked to. I *must* think. It may take hours. Go to sleep, if you want. But let me hold your hand."

For a long while she knelt there in the dark, silently. From time to time she pressed his hand, or rubbed her cheek against it. The distressed intensity of her thought betrayed itself in her rigid body.

"You are not crying, Dicentra?"

"No; I wish I could. Please don't speak."

Ineffably glad that she had freely come to him and was fighting her despair in the rightful kingdom of his sheltering arms, he was content to humor her whim of utter silence.

At length, her tense muscles relaxed and she drew a deep, sighing breath. Then she rose to her feet, kissed his hand, tucked it beneath his own cheek, and started to leave the room.

"You have thought it all out, dear girl?"

"Yes. I'll tell you tomorrow. I'm tired now."

"Good night, dear."

"Good night."

The next morning he noticed that her desk was bare. Typewriter, papers, all were put aside. She was still moodily silent. Thus it went till evening. Then she spoke.

"I am going away, David."

"For how long? And where?"

"For—always. To New York. I must go to a big, busy city, for courage, for inspiration."

"Do you know what you are saying?"

"Oh, David, my own dear, don't oppose me. Let us keep friends. You are far too good for me. I am miserable. I can't ever be a nice wife. It isn't in me. Unless I have my chance to work out my life in my own way, I shall go mad. I never do anything for you. You won't miss me. I'm not necessary to you. I'm going at once, while I have the strength to tear myself away from you. Don't

make it hard for me. Don't quarrel. Be my loyal, true friend to the last."

"How do you know that I shall let you go?"

"You would not permit me to stay now after what I have said," she answered sadly. "You would go yourself if I concluded to stay."

This was truth.

"I fail to fathom you," he said desperately. "Are we both insane? Can you give any reason for this delirium of yours?"

"I can't explain. I can't speak. It's not stubbornness. The situation is indefensible, but nevertheless it exists. Unless I can get away and give my intellect a chance to expand, I shall certainly commit suicide."

"You are being stunted in your intellectual growth?"

"Yes."

"I am keeping you back?"

"Not you, but my own unrest, this prosy union of ours, this unexciting companionship, this homely drudgery."

"I am keeping you back!" he repeated.

He thought of the books he had bought at denial to himself, that she might have them around her; of the leisure he had given her; the safe home; the incentives of his unwavering interest and encouragement.

"I have done all that I could," he said hopelessly.

"Oh, you have, you have! I have tried to profit from your kindness, tried——"

"Stop!" he commanded sternly. "I have come to the end." Giving brief sway to a blinding rage, he brought his clenched fist down upon a frail table near him, shattering it aside.

Pale and cowering, she awaited his next action. It was one of trivial composure. He handed her the evening paper, and pointed to the column containing the leaving time of trains.

"You may count upon me for all necessary assistance," he said with cutting calmness. "We'll arrange this business together. The newspapers

call it 'an amicable separation,' do they not?" His voice broke, and with the gentleness of complete despair, he said, "Dicentra, do this crazed thing quickly, for heaven's sake."

A nightmare of days followed in which she relentlessly planned every detail of her departure. She insisted upon retaining a pretense of good-comradeship, even consulting him about her traveling-ticket and the checking of her luggage.

The very arrival at his door of the carriage which was to take her to the depot, failed to convince Gilman of the reality of her resolve. How could she leave him? Why should she? They had never quarreled. They loved each other even now. He still had faith in her. Surely at the last moment but one, during the ride to the train, she would awaken to the enormity of her mistake and beg to be taken back!

"Good-bye, David!" She was holding out her hand to him.

He took up his hat.

"Oh, you mustn't come with me," said she, shivering nervously. "It would only upset us. We have steeled ourselves to part quietly, and a scene would only mar things without mending them."

"As you will," said Gilman curtly. He sat down wearily and brushed his hand across his forehead in futile effort to clear the haze from his brain. It was all so causeless, so absurd. Did she not see it now? Else why was she lingering aimlessly near him?

"There is no reason why I should not kiss you, is there, Dave?" she asked. Tears were on her cheek.

At sight of them, Gilman's heart throbbed strangely. Of a surety, no woman could weep for her husband's kiss, then take it and go. He gripped his chair to prevent himself from seizing her in his arms, for in honor he could not employ caresses to chain her against her will. Her surrender must come as the imperative choice of her heart.

She clung to him and broke into

sobs. She murmured incoherencies. "It was best for them both." "They could be friends apart when they only fretted each other anear." She kissed him, she pressed her cheek to his——

Gilman felt himself suffocating with the memories which crowded upon him, the hopes——

Then there was utter silence. He was alone. Not gone, not really gone! He stumbled to the window.

Dicentra was in the street. She looked as if she had regained complete composure. She was directing the cabman how best to stow away her bags. There was a certain bright alertness in her face as she turned it yearningly toward her untrammelled future. That light of gladness was the last expression Gilman remembered.

The cab rattled away. Dicentra was of the past.

His unconscious steps took him to her despoiled, deserted den. He sat down aimlessly before her vacant desk. The horribly empty room was astir with imaginings. The dreams that he had dreamed there! The romping little ones that had played about the hearth! The studious, brooding, tender companionship he had thought to share!

"Dicentra!" he cried wildly. He held out his arms. He fell face forward on the desk, and gave way utterly.

Unreal in his own ears, his voice—grief-strangled—broke upon the silence and loneliness:

"My little children! My little children!"



THE IMMORTALITY OF LOVE

A LIGHT that never grows dim,
 A flame that never grows cold,
 A chalice filled with wine to the brim,
 A casket yellow with gold
 Is the heart of love, is the soul of love—
 A tale that never grows old.

Ah, life is the light of love,
 And death is the night of sin;
 Love's gorgeous home is in realms above,
 She visits the life within;
 But the heart of love, and the soul of love,
 Its end shall never begin.

Deep down in the heart of man,
 High up in the heights of God
 Love liveth as only true life can,
 Apart from the flesh and sod;
 But the form of love, and the face of love
 Forever on earth must trod.

ROBERT GOLDSMITH.

MAGIC

THEY brought me forth the Wishing Ring.
I had not seen so strange a thing

In all my life as this slim band
That lay upon my open hand.

They said, "Three wishes shall be thine
By virtue of its power divine."

I answered, "Let me first, I pray,
Forget the joys of yesterday.

"And let be hidden from me now
All hope upon tomorrow's brow.

"And then give to me for mine own,
Today, today ere it be flown."

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE.



HIS FUTURE

"OUR boy Jack is so careless and reckless that I don't know what he will
be good for as a man."
"Sounds as if he'd make a chauffeur."



CHICAGO AGAIN

"I BEG your pardon, sir, but at one time weren't you my husband?"
"I cannot tell now, but if you will leave me your name and address, I'll
have my cashier go over my cheque-books."



CRUSHED!

THE BORE (*at the summer hotel*)—It's raining so hard outside that we can
have a quiet talk in the parlor.

THE VICTIM—I don't think it's raining so hard as that. It's only raining
hard enough for a man to talk to himself.

L'EXCESSIVE COÏNCIDENCE

Par J. H. Rosny

JE me nomme Charles Lambert, et mon père s'appelait Philippe. Ce fait est capital dans ma vie. Si je m'étais seulement appelé Gustave et mon père Auguste, ou si nous avions porté un autre nom patronymique que celui de Lambert, ma vie eût été radicalement différente de ce qu'elle est. Ne me citez pas l'exemple du brahme qui, s'il était parti du pied gauche pour se baigner dans le Gange, au lieu de partir du pied droit, aurait changé la face du monde. C'est une farce philosophique. En réalité, la face du monde s'émeut fort peu de ce que les brahmes partent du pied droit ou du pied gauche. De même, il est généralement indifférent de porter un nom ou un autre. Il faut au moins s'appeler Cauchon, ou Lamoule, ou Leveau, ou Latrouille, pour éprouver quelques embêtements de la part de ses semblables. Mais que vous soyez Duval, Dumont ou Lebrun, c'est au moins aussi kif-kif que bourriquot... Moi, je le répète, un simple changement de prénom mettait le désordre dans tous les pions de ma destinée. Il est vrai cependant qu'il a fallu aussi que je rencontraisse Mlle Simone de Bouhèles, mais cela ne rend la circonstance que plus frappante, puisque d'avance il y avait un rapport défini entre elle et les noms de Charles et Philippe Lambert.

C'est à Biarritz que je recontraï cette jeune personne. J'ignore totalement s'il y a des êtres féminins plus parfaits; je l'ai entendu prétendre, je ne puis me le figurer. Je suis atteint, en ce qui la concerne, d'une espèce de daltonisme du beau. Dès qu'elle paraît, je ne

vois plus qu'elle, je ne retrouve plus de séduction et de grâce qu'en elle. Quand je vous aurai dit qu'elle a un gros tas de cette herbe particulièrement agréable qu'on nomme des cheveux, deux très belles de ces pierres précieuses que sont des yeux, une collection étincelante de petits cailloux de nacre dans le plus délicieux coquillage rouge, ce qu'on tisse de mieux en fait de peau, et tout cela arrangé dans la perfection par le mystérieux couturier qui nous confectionne, vous n'en serez pas plus avancés. "Sachez seulement qu'elle est blonde," comme dit le petit Fortunio. Le fait intéressant est que, du moment où je la vis, les plats les plus épicés me parurent de la gomme arabique. Ce fut au crépuscule, sur la plage, à l'heure où le firmament fait son Tartarin, où le moindre petit nuage se donne des airs de Golconde. Simone passait d'une flaque de lumière violette dans une flaque de lumière orange. Si je l'avais osé, j'aurais rugi d'admiration. Je me bornai à contempler cette petite chose vivante, vêtue d'étoffes argentines, qui enfonçait toutes les féeries du couchant. Je la revis les jours suivants; le mal devint grave, puis chronique. Au bout de la semaine, j'aurais fait le marché de cette moule de Faust pour avoir Mlle de Bouhèles. Et il aurait fichtre bien fallu l'intervention de Méphisto pour en arriver là. Tout me séparait d'elle. D'abord, nos fortunes. J'étais presque pauvre; elle devait apporter à son mari quelques beaux millions—une part de la provende que Bouhèles avait ramassée au Chili, dans les mines. Ensuite, elle était inabordable. Son père refusait carrément de se laisser ap-

procher par quiconque. Il prétendait ne pas vouloir de nouveaux amis; il rejetait avec une dédaigneuse misanthropie toutes les avances. A Biarritz, il ne fréquentait qu'un vieil ours et trois ou quatre femelles exotiques qui, sachant sa volonté expresse, se seraient bien gardées de lui présenter quiconque. Et quand j'aurais été présenté? Le défiant vieillard, soupçonnant en moi quelque éhonté coureur de dot, m'aurait traité en conséquence.

Donc, aucun espoir.

Je ne dirai pas que j'en avais pris mon parti: j'étais pour cela trop profondément atteint. Mais je n'avais pas un atome d'espérance.

Un après-midi que je me promenais dans la direction de la Chinaouge, je m'entendis interpellé par mon prénom, et comme, ne sachant pas bien d'où venait la voix, je ne me retournais pas assez vite, mon nom suivit de près. C'était un mien ami qui arrivait d'un chemin latéral: il avait la déplorable habitude de héler les gens. Je m'arrêtai pour l'attendre; je le vis accourir à grands pas, en avançant un vieux monsieur en qui je reconnus Bouhèles...

Peu après ma rentrée à l'hôtel, on vint me dire qu'une personne demandait à me parler et on me remit la carte de Bouhèles. Cela me surprit étrangement, comme bien vous pensez. Je fis introduire tout de suite mon visiteur, qui se présenta avec son air rogue habituel:

— Demande pardon de vous déranger, fit-il *ex abrupto*, mais je voudrais vous demander un petit renseignement... *peut-être* sans importance...

— Sans importance ou non, fis-je avec une nuance de platitude... je suis tout à votre service...

— Ca ne vous coûtera pas cher, répliqua-t-il avec un gros rire... je

voudrais seulement savoir si j'ai bien entendu tout à l'heure, sur la route: est-ce que vous vous appelez Charles Lambert?

— C'est bien mon nom.

Le vieux me regarda fixement:

— Et pouvez-vous aussi me dire le prénom de votre père?

— Je n'y vois aucun inconvénient: mon père se nommait Philippe.

Bouhèles poussa un gloussement et esquissa un pas de gigue:

— Et votre père a voyagé aux Etats-Unis?...

Mon père n'avait jamais quitté le bon plancher des vaches de sa province natale. J'eus je ne sais quel pressentiment que ma destinée se nouait, et je mentis avec cynisme:

— Oui, mon père a voyagé aux Etats-Unis!

— Alors, il y a dix ans que je vous cherche! hurla Bouhèles en me jetant ses bras sur les épaules... C'est votre père qui a passé la corde au cou du nègre qui avait tué ma femme... j'ai juré que son fils serait mon fils...

Je persévérerai dans mon mensonge; je fus amené en triomphe devant Mlle de Bouhèles, tandis que le père criait:

— C'est le fils de l'homme qui a pendu le nègre!

Les pimbêches exotiques levèrent les bras au ciel; Mlle de Bouhèles, qui me semblait devoir trouver grotesque cette entrée et celui qui en était l'objet, me fit le plus aimable accueil. Et au bout de trois mois, le fils de l'homme qui avait lynché le nègre arrivait au comble de ses vœux...

C'est égal, je ne suis pas sans remords ni sans terreur. Je pense à celui qui porte comme moi le nom de Charles Lambert, dont le père se nommait aussi Philippe, et j'ai un frisson en songeant qu'un jour le hasard, grand maître de la scène à faire, pourrait bien nous mettre en présence!



“JOHNSON'S business is all run down.”
“Yes, he's going to wind it up.”

MITLAND, OF THE BLUES

By Ellis Parker Butler

TORWALK is usually supposed to be in one of the prosperous Western States, but just then it was, as the *Torwalk Mercury* said, "in a state of intense suspense." Its chivalry and its beauty were gathered in the grandstand of the county fair-grounds, and the twin signs of the festive day—white muslin dresses and the odor of fresh-roasted peanuts—made the occasion almost equal to the county fair itself.

The grass in the nearest part of the field inclosed by the half-mile race-track had been carefully mown. At one end of the grandstand sat the Torwalk Juvenile Band playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" with unintentional variations by the inexperienced but whole-souled cornetist. The audience was almost hysterical with interest, and so nervous that it ate peanuts in a tempo even faster than that of the band, which seemed, like a skittish colt, to have become frightened at its own music and to be running away from itself.

It was the day of the first annual inspection of the Torwalk Blues, officially known as Company G, First Regiment, R.N.G., and on the decision of the three inspectors appointed by the Governor of the State depended the fate of Torwalk's pride. If the Torwalk Blues received the highest average Torwalk's pride would swell to insufferably arrogant vanity, and as it felt that it knew the Torwalk Blues its pride was prepared to swell.

Victories were common in Torwalk. Thrice had the Torwalk Hook and Ladder Company won the champion-

ship belt, and it now was *hors concours*. Thrice had the Torwalk Dauntless Hose Company won the championship belt, and it, too, was *hors concours*. With no laurels left to conquer at the Firemen's tournaments Torwalk had organized the Torwalk Blues to wrest the militia championship from the haughty sister city of Gavenport, where it had been held for eight years by the Gavenport Greys.

For almost a year the Blues had been drilled twice each week by Captain Mitland. They knew the manual of arms backward and forward, and the tactics from A to Z. The editor of the *Torwalk Mercury* pronounced the company "letter perfect." So did Judge Gray, who was reported to have been near Bull Run at the time of the first battle. So did everyone in Torwalk. But now the fateful day had arrived. Torwalk waited, impatient but proud.

On the turf the Blues stood silent, immobile and impressive, forming a perfect line, facing the grandstand. The company was at parade rest, and every rifle, every hand, every eye was in the same position. The company looked stern, warlike, terrible! No wonder Torwalk was proud. There was but one blemish to mar the perfection, the unanimity of the company. Did I say every eye glanced straight ahead? One eye did not. Private Gorman's left eye, instead of staring straight ahead stared for the right, forming the only flaw. A gentle murmur of regret swept over the grandstand. It was whispered that Gorman should have been kept out of the com-

pany, but it was admitted that he could not prevent his left eye getting out of line. He was cross-eyed.

But it was not on the company itself that the grandstand gazed with the greatest interest. Fine as the company was there were two figures far more impressive. One was Captain Mitland, of the Blues, standing erect and motionless before his company in his simple blue uniform, and the other was Colonel Haggerty, also a citizen of Torwalk, but a member of the governor's staff and an inspector of militia. The colonel glowed with brilliant blue and white, and glittered with massive gold braid and fringe. Huge, impressive and important, he formed a striking contrast to Captain Mitland, who was small, thin and intense.

The two other inspectors remained comfortably seated in the shade of the judges' stand, but Colonel Haggerty found countless errands that carried him back and forth before the grandstand with his sword rattling and the white plumes of his hat waving in the gentle breeze. Anyone would have admired the colonel, and all envied him. It did not matter that he did not know a "right-about face" from a "parade rest." He was a personal friend of the governor, and a colonel by appointment, and being so, he was able to choose his own uniform. He did not spare expense. He almost created a famine in gold braid.

Those who knew him as the genial proprietor of the Torwalk Hotel could scarcely recognize him as the colonel.

With his uniform he donned haughtiness, and to no one was he more haughty than to Captain Mitland, of the Blues. He passed the captain a dozen unnecessary times merely to force a salute from him. He stood beside him in order that the captain might seem smaller and more insignificant than ever. He bent down ostentatiously to whisper to the captain, merely to show Torwalk that he had to bend down if he wished to reach the captain's ear. For the captain was the smallest man in the Blues.

He was so short that if he had been one inch shorter he could not have enlisted.

In one corner of the grandstand sat Miss Jennie Burnett, and the colonel's journeys took him most often toward that end. Once he even saluted Miss Jennie in military fashion, causing her to blush, and those below her to turn and stare at her with curiosity. Not once did Captain Mitland gaze in that direction, however. First, because he could not have borne the sight, and, secondly, because he was so near-sighted he could not see an inch beyond his nose. He knew Miss Jennie was somewhere in the grandstand, but just where, he could not tell. He knew that the colonel was on parade for her benefit, just as the colonel knew that the captain would do his best for her sake. They were rivals for her hand.

It was because Miss Jennie said she liked military men, apropos of the colonel's uniform, that Mitland agitated the formation of a military company, wrestled with the book of tactics until he was the best authority on them, took the lead in every matter connected with the organization of the Blues, and made himself the only logical candidate for captaincy. For Miss Jennie he drilled the privates until they were perfect. He slaved at militia work for her, and only now, so far, was a weak equality with the colonel in her affections. But he hoped. If the Blues secured the highest average in the State inspection he would be famous in the State militia, and a possible candidate for a regular elective colonelcy. Then a new governor would be elected, would choose a new staff, and Haggerty would drop back to civilian littleness and plain tailor-made clothes.

The grandstand was growing impatient. Some boys began stamping their feet, and the men, and even the women, took it up.

Colonel Haggerty looked at his watch, turned and walked slowly to the judges' stand and took his place with his two brother inspectors. They

conversed a moment and then the colonel turned toward the grandstand and held up his hand. The band stopped abruptly.

"Ladies and gentlemen," shouted the colonel. "In behalf of my brother inspectors and myself I am requested to make a statement. The inspection will proceed as follows: First, inspection of arms and accoutrements. Second, inspection of tactics and evolutions. Third, target practice. For each of these three a possible total of thirty-three and one-third can be secured, or a total of one hundred for all."

He saluted and turned to the other inspectors and the band began on "The Star-Spangled Banner" for the tenth time. One of the inspectors spoke to him and he turned again to the grandstand with a paper in his hand. The band became silent.

"I wish to explain," shouted the colonel, "that since last year the mode of inspection for evolution and arm tactics has been changed. Companies are no longer allowed to proceed through the manual of arms as they please. The captain will be furnished with his written list of the evolutions, giving the order in which they are to be performed."

He saluted, and there was a roar of applause, but over Captain Mitland's face came an expression of annoyance. He turned toward his company and quickly drew a second pair of spectacles from his pocket and put them on over those he already wore.

The three inspectors descended from the judges' stand, and proceeded to inspect the arms and accoutrements. Then they returned to the judges' stand. Captain Wilkins, U.S.A., one of the inspectors, addressed the grandstand and stated shortly that, while he was not permitted to divulge the number of points gained by the Blues in this first portion of the inspection, it was a very praiseworthy number.

The multitude yelled and waved fans and handkerchiefs, and the band, with striking originality, played "The Star-Spangled Banner."

An aide carried a written list of the evolutions to Captain Mitland. The assembly saw the captain hold it to his eyes, so close that it seemed pressed against his nose, and then heard the first sharp, snappy command. Like a single beautiful machine the rifles arose and dropped on the shoulders of the men. There was a moment's pause, and then the second command. The men obeyed quickly and without an error.

Captain Mitland proceeded down the list. With his eyes glued to the paper he followed the Blues about the field, striving to read one command before the previous one was completed. At every evolution the grandstand thundered applause. Once Mitland, his nose in his paper, tripped over his scabbard and nearly fell, but he recovered his balance.

As the company came swinging down the field full-faced toward the grandstand, spread out in one long, mathematically straight line, every foot leaving the sod at the same moment, every face impassive, the assembled Torwalk citizens arose in an ecstasy and yelled. It was a beautiful sight. Then came the sharp command, "Right-wheel! Forward! March!" and like a single broad sweep of a scythe the Blues swung about and started off at right-angles to the grandstand.

"Double-quick! March!" shouted Captain Mitland.

The line doubled its pace. Captain Mitland increased his own. Suddenly he stopped. Those who were watching him saw his spectacles fall, glittering, to the ground. He bent quickly and felt in the close-cropped grass. He felt feverishly, scraping his fingers, rake-like, about him, and the Blues marched on! He dropped on his hands and knees and raked wildly with both hands. An aide came running hastily. A dull groan shook the grandstand. An impetuous youth leaped the grandstand railing, dashed across the race-track, and upon the turf beyond, and he too began searching for the spectacles. The crowd in

the grandstand stood up, shouting and yelling.

At the double-quick the Blues marched down the field, every ear waiting for the next command. None came. Straight ahead into the track fence they marched. There they paused, but only for a moment. One-half, true to the soldier's duty, insisted on going forward. One-half, knowing someone had blundered, insisted on awaiting the next command. There was a short, whispered, profane argument, and then one-half of the company climbed the fence at double-quick and marched across the track, climbed the fence on the other side and hastened toward the spot where Agricultural Hall loomed in the distance. The other half remained facing the fence, marking time and steadfastly gazing after their vanishing comrades.

When Captain Mitland recovered his spectacles he ran to the remnant of his company and with a quick "About face!" not written in the list he held in his hands, he tore it away from the rails where it was valiantly glued. He did not notice that he had lost half of his brave men. It was not until later that he sent a sergeant for them. The sergeant found them marking time face to face with the side of Agricultural Hall.

With the remnant of his company Captain Mitland finished the evolutions, ending with the firing tactics, in which the Blues excelled. Shamed and disgusted as the captain was with himself he felt a momentary thrill as he heard his command go through the firing tactics.

He drew them up in line before the judges' stand, and facing his company, or as much of it as he had left, he gave his orders. At the command "Load!" the breeches clicked—not in the tangled manner of the breeches of the Gavenport Greys—but sharp and clear, like one single rifle. At the command "Fire!" every trigger snapped simultaneously, and if the rifles had been loaded every cartridge would have exploded on the same second.

Twice he faced his faithful few. Twice they fired in their unexampled manner, and then giving them the "Parade rest!" he advanced to the judges' stand and saluted.

The inspectors talked earnestly a few moments, comparing their notes, and the colonel once more leaned forward to address the grandstand. Mitland faced the grandstand, his head erect, his face passionless and calm.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried the colonel. "On behalf of my brother inspectors and myself I wish to say that with two exceptions we have been delighted with the exhibition drill of the Torwalk Blues. We have decided, however, not to hold the accident at the fence a failure on the part of the company. While we may criticize the company for its negligence of the State militia laws in admitting, and particularly in choosing as captain a man whose eyes do not fulfil the legal requirements, we shall pass that over this time, on condition that a rigid optical examination of men and officers be made before the next annual inspection."

He paused, but the expected applause did not come. Captain Mitland, of the Blues, stood motionless and expressively calm. The colonel shook his gold lace and swelled his massive chest and continued.

"If Captain Mitland will, at his convenience, despatch a sergeant to recall the half of his company that climbed two fences and is now, doubtless, somewhere between here and Gavenport, we will overlook the first error."

The captain's shoulders shrank forward ever so slightly and his hand trembled on his sword hilt, but his face remained stonily impassive.

"I regret to say, however," shouted the colonel, "that we have a very sad event to report to the governor. While complimenting you and Company G, First Regiment, R.N.G., on the excellent manner in which the company handled its rifles in the firing drill that concluded its evolutions, we are obliged to call attention to the position occupied by the captain of the company

during the firing drill. As he stood immediately before the muzzles of his company's rifles we are obliged to report to our governor that Captain Mitland was shot and killed on the field of honor! That he is, so far as the militia of this great State is concerned, dead!"

When the shouting and laughter ended, some of those on the grandstand noticed Captain Mitland. They saw him raise his sword and salute the judges' stand and then with a swift, angry movement, seize the blade and break it across his knee, and throw the parts on the ground.

Still swiftly upright in his deportment he walked to where his first lieutenant stood and whispered a few words, and then slipped away through a paddock gate and so out behind the grandstand, and out of the fair grounds and out of the military life of Torwalk. He walked slowly and sadly.

A few left the grandstand before the target shooting began, for it was apt to be less interesting than the drill, since the targets were so far away that hits and misses could not be distinguished, and the Torwalk Blues were novices with the loaded rifle.

Those who remained chatted and laughed and ate peanuts. It was the general opinion that the colonel had been very witty, but a little hard on the captain.

When the target shooting was finished the sun was low and a deep shadow filled one end of the grandstand.

The colonel came to the rail of the judges' stand for his final effort. He

smiled broadly, and glanced toward the corner where he had last seen Miss Jennie.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried. "On behalf of my brother inspectors and myself I wish to make a very gratifying, and at the same time somewhat unpleasant, announcement. Unpleasant because you will not like to hear that Company G has not done itself justice at the targets; pleasant because it relieves us of an unpleasant duty. I announced a short while ago that Captain Mitland had, in military law and practice, been shot dead by his own company and that we should have to so report to the governor. I am glad to say that we were mistaken. Captain Mitland is alive and well. After learning the results of the target practice of Company G this afternoon my brother inspectors and I have decided that Captain Mitland knew what he was doing. We believe, from the results of the target practice, that in standing immediately in front of his company's rifles he was standing in the safest possible place. The score of the company is zero out of a possible thirty-three and one-third."

The colonel saluted twice. Once to the grandstand in general, and once, in particular, to the corner where Miss Jennie had sat, but each was wasted. The assembly was already trooping down the board seats and Miss Jennie, halfway to town, was walking beside Mitland, of the Blues, and saying:

"I'm glad you resigned, anyway. I could never marry a military man. They are so bossy."



HINTS FOR NICE YOUNG MEN

- TO raise a luxuriant mustache—lift it gently by the edges.
 To keep trousers from bagging—leave them at the tailor's.
 To take spots from polka-dot ties—blot them out with ink.
 To pick out a good wife—consult her husband.
 To entertain girl friends—knock their girl friends.
 To entertain men friends—bottles, that's all.

FLIRTATION

TWO idle eyes one time I knew,
 As tender as the heaven's blue;
 Idle, so far as I could see,
 Save when their glances fell on me,
 And there was lots for them to do.

They were so soft, so sweet, so true,
 I worshiped them, of course, and You;
 A dearer girl there could not be
 To idolize.

You let me flirt and gently woo;
 You let me supplicate and sue;
 But when I set my passion free,
 And vowed my love on bended knee,
 All that you said was, "Those are two
 Too idle lies."

FELIX CARMEN.



IN GREENLAND

"YOU look sleepy."
 "I am; I was awake five months last night."



AYE, AYE!

CHAUFFEUR (*after the race*)—Say, Bill, is this your eye? I found it in
 my tool-box.



HE NEEDED THE MONEY

"BUT is an operation absolutely necessary, doctor?"
 "Certainly; I've got to have a vacation next month."

ANNE HOUGHTON, STAR

By Juliet Sager

BROOKLYN, June 30, 1904.

MY DEAR MATTIE:

It is half-past eight o'clock in the morning; I have an appointment with my dressmaker at nine, and a rehearsal at ten, that will last till noon or after. At one o'clock I must be in the theatre for the matinee, and won't get out before half-past five. I must be back there at seven, and will get home again near midnight—and on the table beside me lies a sixty-page part I haven't looked at yet and must know almost letter perfect for rehearsal tomorrow at ten. That's a fair sample of the elegant leisure I'm enjoying as the leading lady of the justly famous Greenbaum Stock Company, and I recount it in full to remind you of the butterfly existence you gave up when you renounced the stage to marry; also, to explain why I've been so long answering your letter.

Your invitation sounds to me like the offer of a month's sojourn in paradise. I'm fairly hungry to see you again, and four weeks with you in the blessed country quiet, with no rehearsals to attend, no gowns to worry over, no parts to study!—you can't possibly know how it tempts me unless you have been as fagged out in body, brain and soul as I am now! But I can't come, dear. It is absolutely out of the question.

In the first place, if I went away our second woman would play my parts, and she is ambitious, fairly clever and abominably pretty, and ten to one I'd return to find her permanently installed as leading lady, and myself out of an engagement. That's one of the

beauties of this profession, you know—it's fight, fight, fight to get your footing, and then fight, fight, fight to keep it. The man who said eternal vigilance was the price of safety must have been an actor. I dare say if I did lose this engagement I'd get another easily enough, and perhaps a better one; but I might be out of work for some time, and on account of Elsie and Aunt Liddy I am always afraid to run the slightest risk.

Anyway, I couldn't afford it. When I lay off I get only half-salary, and my own unavoidable expenses would eat that up, and then where would Elsie's cheques come from? Whatever happens, those cheques must be sent off regularly and as big as I can manage. It is the only part of a mother's duty I've ever been able to perform for the poor child.

That's the situation, in plain words. I'm chained here—and afraid to break the chain. I sha'n't take any vacation at all, except perhaps to go away somewhere for one week and get into bed and lie there till for once I've had all the sleep I need. Greenbaum wants me to stay with him next season, and I suppose I'd better accept the offer quickly and thankfully. Thirty or forty weeks more of this treadmill! It makes me dizzy to think of it! How will I ever, ever drag through them? But I mustn't look ahead. I've got to do it, and there's no use fretting.

The worst of it is, I can't see but what I'll be doing this sort of thing the rest of my life, and slipping gradually down into poorer and poorer parts till I wind up as a character old

woman in some miserable repertoire show. When next season ends, when all those weeks are over, how much better off will I be? I'll be precisely where I am now, only a year older and more fagged. This engagement isn't advancing me a particle professionally; and pinch and scrape as I may, I'm not saving any money. The salary is good enough—it looks princely on paper, but it's heart-breaking how the most of it has to go for wardrobe—new gowns, new hats, new wraps every single week, and pretty, well-made ones, too, or Greenbaum sneers and hints that if I can't dress my parts properly he will find a woman who can. I've been working here thirty-nine weeks, and I have something less than two hundred dollars to show for it. Magnificent result, isn't it? Stimulating to energy and ambition? Oh, if I had only myself to consider, I'd throw the whole thing up today, and either get a decent engagement or starve in the trying. But there's Elsie to think of.

By the way, do you know that it was twelve years yesterday since you and I packed our trunks and started off to New York to seek our fame and fortunes?—two poor little half-fledged actresses from the wilds of the West plunging into this whirlpool as confidently as if it had been our own familiar bath-tub! Heavens, what dreams we dreamed and what plans we made! In no time at all we were both to be leading women drawing fabulous salaries, and in six months, at the very longest, I was to be rich enough to send for Elsie! Well, blessed be ignorance, I say. For if I'd guessed how it all would turn out, I would still have had to go, and minus my hope and courage, which was the only capital I had.

You are married and safe and happy, and I don't suppose these anniversaries are very significant to you; but to me they are little foretastes of the Judgment Day. This last one was particularly so, perhaps because I'm tired out and perhaps because I'm beginning to see things in their true

light. Twelve years of work—loving, careful work, winter and summer, sick and well—and what have I achieved? For fortune, a lot of trunks filled with worthless old wardrobe. For fame, a reputation among out-of-town managers as a "reliable stock actress." That's all, positively all. I'm utterly unknown in New York, which is to say that professionally I do not exist. Oh, I'm richly rewarded for my labors! I'm a proud and happy woman when I cast up my accounts every twenty-ninth of June!

I know how you will answer me when you write again. You will say that I have had my share of success, that critics—out-of-town critics, Mattie—have labeled me "clever" and praised me and predicted great things for me. That's true, but the opposite of consoling, for it makes my failure to justify them all the more glaring and inexcusable. You'll say, too, that but for my squeamishness I might have traveled the same easy road to celebrity that half the women in the business do, and that time and time again I've deliberately made enemies where I might have made useful friends.

Then see how my plans for Elsie have miscarried. In all these years I have never once been able to spend the time or money to so much as go home for a visit with her. Twelve years, mind you—and she my daughter! It's been all I could do to keep a roof over her head and clothes on her back. If Aunt Liddy could have come with her to look after her, I might possibly have arranged for them both to live East with me; but auntie can't stand this climate, hiring a nurse wasn't to be thought of, and I couldn't take care of her properly, in the theatre half the time as I am, and liable to go on the road any day—and there you are, plump up against my usual luck.

It was only common sense to leave her out in California where she had a settled home and lived a normal life and was comfortable and happy—Aunt Liddy and she adore each other, you know, but that hasn't made the

separation much easier for me to bear. Think of it—she was a little, bare-legged, lisping child when we came away, and now she is a young girl as tall as I am! I can't believe it.

She is frantic to come on and live with me. It breaks my heart to refuse her, but there's the same old insuperable difficulty about taking care of her after she gets here. I couldn't do it. I couldn't spend two hours a day with her. Often I am so busy that I go hungry from sheer lack of time to eat. Poor child! she seems to think I don't want her with me. If only——

I'm an idiot. Fancy my sitting here and pouring out my troubles to you as if you were the Heart-to-Heart Editor of a woman's magazine! It is the effect of that thrice-accursed anniversary. I think the devil invented dates. I mean to forget that particular one, to put it out of my mind entirely. What's the use of being serious? Nothing in the world is worth it—not even the fact that it is after nine o'clock and I'll be late at the dressmaker's. Good-bye, Mattie. I must go at once.

ANNE.

(INCLOSED)

THURSDAY EVENING.

MATTIE DEAR:

Just a line from my dressing-room to tell you what happened at the matinee today. It's odd, having it come so soon after the wail of despair I wrote you this morning. Sort of a "darkest hour before the dawn" idea. Not that it will amount to anything—I'm too wise to go crowing before I actually see the sun—but still——

Healy was in a box this afternoon—the Healy who was with Frohman so long, you know. He started out for himself last season, had a couple of really good companies, and made money, they say. Of course I hadn't the slightest notion why he was there except that I was sure it wasn't to see the piece, as we were playing that venerable relic, "Camille"; but it was a chance for me to make an impression

on A Manager, so I put on my best gowns and worked for all there was in me. The part went well, too—I had my bargain-day audience sniffing into its cotton handkerchiefs as early as the second act. Healy seemed interested in me. He watched every move I made, and after all my big scenes he leaned over and whispered to the young fellow with him. I didn't pay much attention to this other man, except to notice that he was big and boyish and good-looking. If I had guessed——!

Well, as soon as the curtain had gone down on the last act, back came Healy's card with a request to see me at once *on business!* The surprise of it took my breath away. For a minute I could think of nothing but how thankful I was that he hadn't simply waited about the stage entrance and met me on my way home, with my face shiny from cold cream, my hair out of curl, and the lines under my eyes all unmassaged and unprepared for a daylight exhibition! Then I pulled my wits together, rubbed some rouge over Camille's death pallor, and sent back a message that I would see him then and there. In spite of my excitement, I felt deliciously confident and at ease, for I was on my own ground and conscious that I was looking my best. Those loose *négligée* things are very becoming to me, you remember, and I had on a particularly good make-up—I didn't look a day over twenty-five, if I do say it who shouldn't. The circumstances couldn't have been more favorable if I had arranged them myself.

When Healy arrived the young fellow was with him, and it turned out that he is a Mr. Something-or-other MacDonald who has written a play which Healy, if you please, is to produce this fall! *That* was why they had come to watch me work and pass on my qualifications for the leading rôle in the piece! They had been having a lot of trouble finding an available woman, and Healy had seen me or heard good reports of me somewhere or other—bless his soul!

He was very favorably inclined to—

ward me—said he had never seen, in an English-speaking company, a better performance of Camille than mine! If the decision had rested entirely with him, I think he would have made me some definite proposition at once; but MacDonald rather held back. It seems the part is that of a young girl, very sweet and unsophisticated, light comedy at first and intensely emotional later; and MacDonald talked anxiously about “temperament,” and was plainly uncertain of the suitability of mine. These budding dramatists are trying, with their finicky ideas and tragic earnestness. They evolve impossible, pen-and-ink characters out of their heads, and then expect actors to be specially created to play them—and look them and feel them as well. However, I think I am actress enough to play this part of his properly if I get the chance, and you may be sure I kept what few doubts I had all to myself.

In fact, I caught my cue from him and promptly assumed an innocent, confiding air and a sort of feminine shrinking from business details that would have given Greenbaum apoplexy if he had witnessed it! I had to do it delicately, of course, for fear of rousing Healy’s suspicions; but it soothed MacDonald perceptibly. He stopped frowning at the floor and smiled at me several times in quite an approving way. He has a particularly nice smile, too.

Luckily nobody raised the question of age, thanks to my make-up and my foresight in choosing a seat where the light would fall on me most becomingly. A wrinkle or two wouldn’t have made any difference in Healy’s opinion of me so long as they weren’t visible across the footlights, but it is safer not to allow MacDonald fresh grounds for hesitation. He is woefully ignorant of theatrical people and things. He hasn’t learned yet that the whole profession is one big illusion, that appearances are all that count, and that realities have nothing to do with the case.

We talked half an hour or so, but in the end they went away leaving

the matter open—very odd and un-businesslike, but due entirely to MacDonald’s reluctance. They are to write me their decision in the course of a week. Healy wants me, I’m certain; but will he be able to convince MacDonald? That’s the problem.

It’s a thousand to one I’ll never hear from them again; it won’t be the first time I’ve had a chance like this dangled before my eyes only to see it snatched away and bestowed on somebody else. But if anything should come of it, if the lightning should strike—think, think what it would mean for me, Mattie!

To create the leading rôle in a Broadway production with a first-class company under first-class management! It is the opportunity I have been working and waiting for all my life. I—but you won’t understand how I feel about it, for you’ve never been cursed with my ambitions.

Then, too, to be free from this grind of stock work! I could go to bed at night with no qualms about some part I should be studying; I could sleep till I was ready to wake up without a thought of rehearsals; I would have time to read, to think, to live like other people. With the same salary I’m getting now and only one set of costumes to buy for the whole season I’d feel myself a rich woman. I could send for Elsie. I could do all the things I dreamed of doing twelve years ago.

Bah! where’s my common sense? Here I am, building air castles like a sentimental miss of fifteen! Haven’t I had enough experience in theatrical affairs to know how this one will end? I’ll never hear from it again. MacDonald will persuade Healy to engage some chit of a girl just out of a dramatic school who has an angelic face and can’t tell an R. U. E. from a proscenium arch; and I’ll be left to plod along as—

Good heavens, Mattie, the overture’s on and I’m not half-dressed! I had no idea it was so late. Can’t stop to write another word, but if I should hear from Healy I’ll let you know at

once. In the meantime I sha'n't forget that "Blessed are they who expect little, for they will receive less." Good night again.

ANNE.

II

BROOKLYN, July 11, 1904.

It's settled, Mattie—settled! Contracts signed and delivered. By all the laws and managers and men, I am engaged to play the leading female rôle in "Youth's Heritage," to be produced in New York City early in September!

It was decided several days ago, but I haven't had a moment since to write you about it. We are getting ready to put on a couple of big Drury Lane melodramas here, and what with carloads of scenery and a stageful of suppers we have to rehearse every minute we aren't acting. Then MacDonald has been anxious to talk with me about Elfrida—that's my part—and has monopolized whatever time I wasn't obliged to spend in the theatre. He is charming, Mattie, simply charming; big and manly and yet boyish—and so refreshingly and contagiously enthusiastic. This is his first play, you know, and he thinks its reception by the critics and the public is going to be life or death to him! Poor fellow, he believes in ART yet. I wonder how long it will be before the box-office receipts will have become his only concern?

I'm happy to inform you that he is rather outgrowing his distrust of me and my "temperament," and it's not my fault if he isn't! Such pains as I take to keep the dark side of me turned away from him! No cynicism, no over-much knowledge of the world and its wickedness when he's about! I don't care. He looks so distressed and worried if I forget my rôle and laugh when I should look shocked or sweetly serious! My interviews with him are a sort of indirect rehearsal for the white-souled Elfrida. Sounds strenuous, doesn't it? But it's not the effort you may imagine, for there is some-

thing about him that makes one simple and wholesome, willy-nilly.

For all Healy says he is a good business man and considered very brilliant in a literary way, he is absurdly credulous and unsophisticated about women. He takes us at our face value and doesn't seem to know that there's generally make-up on the face. For instance, I don't think he suspects in the least how much older I am than he is—some ten years in age and forty in experience. It doesn't occur to him to speculate on the fact that he has never seen me in private life except through a white chiffon veil or under discreetly shaded lights! He knows I have been married, of course; but I haven't told him about Elsie yet. I shall have to, later on, but just at present I'm afraid to risk it. His Elfrida to be played by a woman old enough to have a half-grown daughter—goodness knows how he would bear the revelation! It might have fatal consequences for me. But once the piece has been produced and it and I have made a success together, he won't give a snap whether I am nineteen or ninety. Only I wish he might never have to be too thoroughly enlightened.

The more I hear of the play, the better I like it and the surer I am that it will make a great hit. Elfrida is a beautiful part, too—if anything, a wee bit too beautiful. It worries me a trifle sometimes. Will I ever be able to express all the tenderness and purity and innocence of it? Mattie, I *wish* I were young again! In growing old, I've lost so much besides youth. I realize it now, when I talk to MacDonald, as I never did before.

Still, he seems perfectly satisfied and confident of my powers, so surely it's silly of me to be worrying about it—now. I'll do enough of that the last week or two before the opening night. Oh, it is sickening to think how much depends on my success or failure, isn't it? On one side, reputation, money, assured position. On the other, a forced retreat to second-class theatres and stock companies, with a spectacu-

lar fiasco like a millstone around my neck to keep me down. Mattie, I *must* succeed!

I've given my notice to Greenbaum, and will leave here August 1, glory be! Rehearsals won't begin till two weeks later, and I shall go over to New York and put in the time resting and studying Elfrida. I thought at first of going off to the mountains, but MacDonald insisted that I should stay in town so that we might work on the part together.

He has just sent up his card, so I must say good night to you, old girl. I'm going out to dinner with him—for the third time this week, by the way! I'm all toggled out and looking rather well in spite of being so tired—a velvet gown of a dull green shade that makes my hair redder than ever, a very fetching new toque, *and* a veil! There's one comfort—whatever doubts he may have about my "temperament," he seems to approve unreservedly of my exterior. Actually claims to admire my slenderness—calls me "svelte"! Good-bye, dear. Wish you were here to go with us.

Your
ANNE.

III

NEW YORK, August 7.

DEAR OLD MATTIE:

The very happiest woman in the whole world is trying to compose herself enough to write you this letter! Happy?—that's a silly, narrow, colorless little word to describe me!

Mattie, MacDonald is so delighted with the way I am getting on with Elfrida that I am to be starred in the part—*starred!* Can you realize it? I can't. To jump in one minute from obscurity to—well, it *will* be fame, dear, if I make good!

And that's the blesseddest part of it—I know I will make good. How can I help believing in myself when he believes in me so? He warms me through and through. The ice that's been forming around me these dreadful years has melted—I have all my

old enthusiasm back again, with all my hard-earned knowledge and experience to direct it.

Then, too, this happiness is having an outward effect on me that seems miraculous. I feel young and I *look* young, younger than I have in a decade! Of course, the rest I'm having and the various kinds of beauty doctoring I'm indulging in have something to do with the change, but the most of it is due simply and solely to peace of mind and hope.

You think I'm crazy, don't you, dear? You are saying to yourself, "And this is the woman who once took a solemn oath never, so long as she might live, to believe in anything or anybody, herself included—to expect nothing, hope nothing, dream nothing!" Well, I did vow that, and I've lived up to my creed for fifteen years, but—everything is different now.

Yes, it's MacDonald. I may as well admit it. Mattie, I didn't know there were such men in the world. He's—oh, there's no use trying to tell you what he is! I thought I was past this sort of thing long, long ago, but thank God, I'm not! Yes, thank God, whatever comes of it I am a woman again, not a bitter lump of sexless flesh.

Oh, I get cold and frightened just writing this to you. Somehow I see myself plainer through your eyes. The thing is impossible and ridiculous; I've taken leave of my senses. What have I, Anne Houghton, to do with love? And how could he—young, wholesome, with all life before him—how could he care for me, old and world-worn as I am? And yet—Mattie, he *does*, he *does*!

Not that he has told me so in words; indeed, I doubt if he is quite conscious of what is happening to him. He only feels and doesn't stop to analyze. But he is not content a moment away from me, and the way he looks at me—his voice when he speaks—his touch—And then the things he says to me!—every other sentence is a declaration of love! But it has come about so gradually and naturally, and, as I told you, he is so

unbelievably inexperienced in such matters that he never questions, much less tries to explain, the meaning of it. I know the signs better—to my sorrow, heaven help me! Is there anything, anything I wouldn't give to be as fresh and unsullied and ignorant of the evil side of life as he is? I've kept myself a good woman through it all—you know that, Mattie; but oh, oh, how the pitch clings to one and stains one's mind and soul!

Sometimes I think I should tell him the whole story—about Tom and Elsie, and everything. But I can't, I can't. I open my lips and the words won't come. Sometimes I think I will walk straight into a blaze of sunshine and say, "Look at me. I'm old—years and years older than you. When you were a little boy playing childish games, I was a wife and a mother with my eyes opened wide to the sin and wretchedness of the world. While you were learning your Latin I was learning poverty and despair and more of sin and wretchedness. It is all written there in my face, but I've never let you see it before. Read it now to the last word." But I cannot do it. It would hurt less to die.

Besides, if I wait a while until his love is older and deeper and he knows it for love and tells me of it, perhaps then he will not care. He is so different from most men, and it is only a matter of eight years, anyhow. He is nearly twenty-nine and I am just a trifle past thirty-seven. What is eight years if two people love each other? Elsie—the thought of her makes me shiver, poor child! I must tell him about her very soon, for I have promised her she shall come East as soon as it is certain the play is a success and will run all season. That will be hard enough, though I shall do it as gently and diplomatically as I can; but what I dread most is the moment when he actually sees her—my daughter! It will emphasize my age, it will turn a new light on that far-away, vague past of mine. Still, if he loves me—really loves me—

Are you quite disgusted with me, Mattie? I can't blame you if you are, but please do try to be patient. Between MacDonald and my part, I'm not responsible for my words or deeds! You ought to forgive a great deal to a woman who, after thirty years of struggle and unhappiness, hears Love and Fame both knocking at her door!

I'm getting all new gowns for this great occasion—five of them and each simply exquisite. Perhaps I could have remodeled some of my old ones, but to be well dressed is half the battle, you know, and then I couldn't bear to put Elfrida into second-hand finery. The taint of the Camilles and Saphos and Mrs. Tanquerays might linger in the folds and tarnish her! Good night, dear old friend. Pray for me. (I mean that.)

ANNE.

IV

AUGUST 8.

MATTIE, Elsie is here! In New York! In this hotel—asleep—in a room just across the hall!

I don't know how to tell you about it. I am so confused that I can't think clearly yet. But she is here—Elsie—my daughter. I have been talking with her all the evening. She kissed me good night.

It was this afternoon that she came. I was studying Elfrida. MacDonald is out of town, and I had given orders that I was not at home to anybody. The boy came and said there was a very old friend downstairs—that was the message, "a very old friend"—who wished to see me. I thought it was you, Mattie, and I told him to bring you up at once. I was so delighted I could hardly wait. When the knock sounded I was ready to welcome *you*.

Then the door opened and there stood a girl. She was as tall as I, and very, very pretty. And young—so young!

"How do you do?" she said, and laughed, her eyes dancing at me.

I did not know her. I was certain

I had never seen her before. I did not even guess who she was. Yet I began to tremble. There was something about her that was so strange and still so familiar.

"How do you do?" I said, not moving.

She laughed outright then. "Well, upon my word! You don't know me! I never heard of such a thing!" she said.

The curtains were drawn, as I always keep them nowadays, and she ran across the room, jerked one aside, and pulled me up to a mirror. "Now do you know who I am?" she cried, and pointed to the glass.

I looked. Our two faces were reflected side by side. And, Mattie, they were the same face—the same face! One was fresh and round and—and eighteen, and the other faded and worn and thirty-seven; but they were the same face. The same hair, the same eyes, the same features, the same coloring and expression. The difference between them was only what there is between new cloth and old, of the same material. I knew them both. That pretty, young face used to live in my own mirror—it belonged to me and smiled when I smiled, and blushed and sparkled back at me. There it was again. I could see it, it was *mine*. But it would not answer me, it did not move unless Elsie moved, it did not smile unless she smiled. It was not I any longer—I was that pale, staring thing beside it. I looked and looked, forgetting Elsie, forgetting everything but that there was my youth and that it was gone from me.

Elsie laughed again—she laughs a great deal. "Why, you look as if you saw a ghost!" she said.

That was precisely what I was seeing—a ghost of my poor, dead self. She should not have done it, Mattie. It was cruel, it was too great a shock.

"But you know me now, don't you, mama?" she went on gaily, and put her arms around me and hugged and kissed me.

I can't tell you how strange it seemed.

I kept saying to myself, "This is Elsie—my baby Elsie. She is here in my arms. This is the moment I have striven for and dreamed of for twelve years. It is the happiest moment of my life." But my heart felt like ice. Try as I would, I could not be glad. I was just sick and faint and dazed. It was some time before it even occurred to me to wonder how and why she had come. When I asked her, she said:

"Oh, I got tired of waiting for you to send for me, so I packed up and came along anyway. Aunt Liddy wouldn't come with me. She said you would be furious."

"You came alone—all that way alone?" I asked her. "But why didn't you write? Why didn't you let me know?"

"For fear you would forbid it," she told me, laughing.

I reminded her that I had promised to send for her as soon as the play had been produced and its future and mine definitely settled. "Couldn't you have waited one more month?" I asked.

"No," she said, "I couldn't. Because I want to be in the play with you. You will get me a part, won't you, mama?" And she snuggled up closer to me and put her head on my shoulder.

It was so childish, so absurd, and she was so earnest about it, that it carried me back to the days when she was my little girl and coaxing for ponies and all sorts of impossible things. For a moment I thought I had my baby back again and could have cried with the joy and relief of it—but only for a moment.

I explained as gently as I could how hopeless her desire was—just as I used to about the ponies. I told her I had nothing whatever to do with engaging the company, that I couldn't ask such favors of the management, etc., etc. The tears came into her eyes—baby Elsie's tears in baby Elsie's blue eyes, but she kept on coaxing as if she had not heard a word.

I explained it all again. "Besides, there is no part for you," I said.

"And if there were a part, no manager would trust it to an inexperienced little girl like you."

She sat up straight and looked me in the face. "Ah, but I'm not inexperienced!" she cried triumphantly. "I played all last season in the San Francisco Stock, and they said I was the best ingénue they had ever had!"

Then she told me how almost a year ago she had persuaded poor old Aunt Liddy to take her up to 'Frisco; how she had got an engagement with this company, and had been playing with them ever since. "I wouldn't let Aunt Liddy write you about it for fear you might object," she said. And all that time I had thought her going quietly to school in a country town! Oh, between them they had fooled me well!

But I was too hurt and bewildered to be very angry. Then, too, while she was talking I had discovered what it is about her that makes me shrink and shiver so. It is her voice. It is exactly like Tom's—as exactly as you can imagine a woman's to be like a man's. If I shut my eyes, I could believe it is he himself speaking. The sound of it released memories I have had chained up for years. Am I never, never to be done with that man?

Elsie kept on talking steadily, urging and coaxing me to get her into "Youth's Heritage" somehow or other. She did not seem to see how incongruous and absurd it would have been—mother and daughter in the same piece, and the mother playing a young girl! All New York would have laughed at me. Thank heaven, there is not the slightest possibility of such a thing! The company had been complete for weeks, and there is absolutely no opening in it for her or anybody else.

Well, finally I convinced her of that; and then I tried to persuade her to go back home and wait just one month longer. I explained all over again how busy I should be with rehearsals and dressmakers, how worried and nervous I should be, how I should need perfect quiet and peace of mind, how I should have no time to amuse

her or take her about. I promised again that if she would leave me free till after the play had been safely launched I would send for her then, would try to get her an engagement, would do all I could to make her happy and contented. No, no! she was determined to stay on now. Mattie, I can't have her here, talking, laughing, running in and out, begging to have this and do that and go here and there! Every drop of energy in me must go to Elfrida—I don't dare risk one handicap. Then—MacDonald! I can't have him know about her yet. Not yet, not till I have proved myself to him. Oh, it's out of the question—she cannot stay now!

I argued and argued till I was tired and sick, but she would not understand. In the end, I had to exert my authority, I had to tell her she *must* go back. Even then I think she would have defied me openly if it had not been for lack of money, but it turned out that the journey here had taken her last dollar. She will go—but not for two days. I was too worn out to defeat her there. I pitied her disappointment, of course, I'm not so heartless and selfish as she tacitly accused me of being; but what is one little month out of a girl's life compared to all my future and my happiness? Just one little month against all the rest of my life! And remember, she will share in this very success I am working for! If I am once firmly established as a star, I can and will do ten times as much for her as I've ever been able to do before.

I'm trying to plan these two days so that there will be no chance of MacDonald's accidentally discovering she is here. I have written him that I have been called out of town on business, and I shall leave strict orders downstairs that the same message be given anyone who asks for me. I'm safe enough, I think, but it's not a pleasant situation. If only she had been patient and trusted me a little longer!

Oh, Mattie, how miserable I am! Think of it—miserable, and Elsie under

the same roof! Does everything turn out like this, I wonder? For twelve years she has been my first thought, my greatest anxiety; I have dreamed night and day of the time when we should be together again; and now when we do meet—we are strangers. She does not love me—she does not even *like* me. I read that in her eyes when she opened the door. Perhaps it is my fault. I don't know. I did my best. But I can't seem to realize she is Elsie. And she's not! She is a woman, a woman I'm not even acquainted with, a woman who looks me in the face and demands right of way for her ambitions as if I were an enemy!

. . . I've been looking at her baby pictures—God knows I loved her then! I love her now—I do, I must! This is horrible, unnatural! It was only the shock of seeing her so suddenly and finding her grown up—as if any child wouldn't grow up in ten years! Tomorrow I will be used to the sight of her. Oh, tomorrow I am sure I will love her as I ought! These two days shall be as happy for both of us as I can make them. I'll forget everything but that she is my own dear daughter. If she really doesn't love me—and perhaps I'm mistaken about that—I'll be such a mother to her that she won't be able to help learning to love me now. Then in one month—four short weeks—she shall come to live with me forever, if she will. Dear, dear little baby Elsie!

It's almost daylight. I must try to get some sleep. Good night, Mattie. Maybe I shouldn't have written you all this, but you won't think any worse of me than you can help, will you?

ANNE.

(INCLOSED)

MORNING.

I must tell you how it has all come out. Oh, it's funny, funny, funny! We plan and scheme and—

I must have slept a little, for I dreamed of Tom. I heard him coming toward me, singing as he used to. I jumped out of bed, still half-asleep.

It was Elsie, moving about in the sitting-room and humming to herself.

I lay down again until I should get over my silly trembling, and then after a while got up and began to dress. I didn't open the door nor call to Elsie. I wanted to be wide awake and quite myself before I saw her. But I was thinking how we could spend the day so that she would most enjoy it.

Once I thought I heard her speaking to someone, but when I listened I heard nothing more.

Then I did hear voices. I couldn't distinguish the words, but I knew the tones. *It was MacDonald.*

"She will see you as soon as she is dressed, I am sure," I heard Elsie say. I tried to call to her, to bid her come into my room, but I seemed to be dumb. I could hear her going on, in that pretty, slow, shy way of hers. "You are Mr. MacDonald, I know; so I perhaps may as well introduce myself. I am Elsie Wainwright, Miss Houghton's daughter."

"Miss Houghton's daughter?"

"Yes. She is really Mrs. Thomas Wainwright, you know. 'Houghton' is only her maiden name," she said.

And that's the way my secret was told—the secret I had planned to disclose so slowly, so delicately!

Elsie came over to my door and knocked and told me to hurry with my dressing—that Mr. MacDonald was waiting to see me. "That stupid boy told him we were out of town, but fortunately he insisted on sending up his card, so I found out the mistake and sent back word for him to come up at once!" she added.

That explained it. She is clever, this daughter of mine, isn't she?—much, much more clever than her mother. I know now that she meant this from the beginning—to meet him and try to win him over to her side. That is why she was so determined to stay with me.

I could hear them talking as I dressed, laughing and chatting like two old friends. Heaven knows what she was telling him! Something to make him despise me, probably.

When I opened my door, she ran up to me and put her arms around me. "Bad, sleepy-headed old mama!" she cooed, and laid her cheek against mine. It was very pretty, very well done, but—all the curtains were up, the room was ablaze with sunshine, and I could guess how sharply and illuminatingly the contrast between the two faces must be striking MacDonald. I tried gently to push her away, but she clung to me even while I shook hands with him.

He was embarrassed, wishing to conceal his surprise and yet to express his sympathy with our supposed rapture. "It—it is wonderful!" he stammered, looking at us shyly. "I wonder if there are two happier people in all New York this morning?"

"I wonder," I echoed. It was the only thing I could think of to say.

Elsie began to laugh softly—that laugh of Tom's that always meant trouble for somebody. "Oh, mama wasn't so overjoyed as you think, Mr. MacDonald," she said. "She's going to pack me off home tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" He glanced at me in open amazement.

What was the use of trying to explain? I was too tired and discouraged. I just nodded.

"But not tomorrow! Not before the play is produced!" he protested. "Surely you will let her stay and see the first performance!"

Elsie's lips quivered and the tears came into her eyes. "I don't want to see it!" she said. "I think it would break my heart! Oh, Mr. MacDonald, I did so want to be in the play myself! Ever since I was a little girl I've dreamed how when mama should get to be a star I would be in her company and play with her!"

I tried to stop her, but she paid no attention to me. Half crying, half laughing, she poured out the whole story to him—how she had worked in a stock company all winter with this end in view—though she had known less than a month that there was a prospect of my starring—how she longed to be with me, how I had made

excuses and refused to help her. Mat-tie, it seemed to me that I was drowning, sinking down and down into bottomless waters.

MacDonald was interested, sympathetic. I could see that he thought me in the wrong and wondered at my indifference. But I could not say one word in defense of myself.

When she finished at last he sat silent, frowning at the floor as he does when he is thinking deeply. Then he—oh, how am I to tell it?—he jumped up like a boy and cried, "Miss Elsie, you ought to have a part, and you shall have one if I can get it for you! I think I can, too; for Healy told me yesterday that our ingénue had thrown up her engagement on account of illness. If he hasn't signed somebody else there's a chance for you, and the part would suit you to perfection!"

Then I found my voice. It's not easy to lay bare your most secret doubts and fears, to point out and discuss your vulnerable spot; but I did it relentlessly. I told him that it was an absolute necessity for me to keep up at least the appearance of youth if I am to play Elfrida successfully, that with a grown daughter of mine in the cast my whole performance would be unconvincing and perhaps ridiculous, that it would endanger the success of the play itself. "Remember," I said, "you are a new dramatist and I a new star. We will be judged mercilessly. We must take no chances."

I think I should have brought him to reason but for Elsie. She kept fluttering in between us, stopping my mouth with her kisses and blinking away tears whenever MacDonald showed signs of yielding to me. "But no one need know I am your daughter! I will use my own name, 'Wainwright,'" she urged over and over.

The name—what does the name matter when the resemblance between us would betray our relationship to a baby? I reminded them of that.

"Oh, nonsense! Nobody will notice," she said. "And if they should—why, just say I am your sister. I won't

mind, and surely even a new star may have a sister, mayn't she?"

MacDonald fairly jumped at the idea. "Certainly, certainly!" he cried. "That disposes of the last objection. Why didn't we think of it before?"

I was beaten. Elsie's tears had done what all my logic and his common sense could not do. And you may be sure she gave him no time to change his mind nor talk alone with me! Oh, no, not my clever Elsie. She hurried him off that very minute to see Healy. MacDonald called back as they went out the door, "Don't worry, Miss Houghton. I'll do the best I can for her!" I believe, I verily believe he fancies he is doing me a kindness as well as Elsie! Oh, the folly, the blindness, the insanity of it!

I am waiting now to hear the result. My only hope is that Healy has already engaged someone else or that he will refuse to trust her with the part. If I could have contrived to see him first! But I am helpless. All I can do is to sit and wait.

. . . They have been gone four hours now. Four hours to go down to Fortieth street and back! I should be studying; but I can't. I can do nothing but walk up and down the room and wait.

. . . Elsie has just come. She was gone five hours. Healy engaged her at once. She admitted he was reluctant, but MacDonald persuaded him. It is settled. She is to be in the company with me. She and MacDonald went to luncheon together. She said he spoke of coming back for me, but she told him she knew I would be too busy to go. After luncheon they went for a drive in the Park—she said she told him I would be too busy to take her myself.

So it's settled. There's nothing more to say.

A.

V

AUGUST 29.

DEAR MATTIE:

I promised to write you once more before the opening night, but now I am

at it there seems very little to tell you. Rehearsals are going smoothly, everybody has the greatest confidence in the play, Elsie is doing extremely well with her part—and that's all.

But for the work and anxiety of it I shouldn't be able to realize that day after tomorrow I make my debut as a metropolitan star. In the theatre it's different, of course, for there I am still a person of considerable importance and interest; but at home I exist simply as Elsie's mother. I and my paltry affairs must take second place here. If she wishes me to read cues to her I must lay down my own part and do it. I must be ready at all hours to go to the dressmaker's with her or help her with her shopping. I must not shut myself up to rest or study, because she is lonesome or needs my help about something. In short, I must remember that she is to make *her* debut Monday night and that, superannuated as I am, the occasion cannot possibly be as momentous for me as it is for her. Perhaps that's only the natural selfishness of youth; but whatever it is, it is doubling my burden and sapping my strength just when I require it most.

She is in the sitting-room now with MacDonald. He has been here some time, but I have not been out to see him and doubt if I shall go. Experience has taught me the wisdom of leaving her alone with him. She always manages to make me feel myself an intruder—no, not that exactly, but a hopeless outsider who must be received with pronounced cordiality to prevent her discovering that she has spoiled the game. I am too old, you know, to be congenial to either of them. Mattie, she treats me as if I were ninety, patting my hair, arranging my gowns, encouraging me to gird up my tottering form and try to live a little longer!

She does that most when MacDonald is here. If I happen to forget the staidness becoming to my age and venture a frivolous remark, she laughs delightedly and says, "Why, mama, dear, you are feeling quite yourself today!" Then if I lose my temper

and flash out something sarcastic, she bravely winks back a tear and apologizes to MacDonald for my warped disposition. "Poor old mama is so tired," is her favorite excuse for me. Then MacDonald looks at me with reproachful wonder and at her with admiring sympathy. And I sit helpless. There's nothing I can say or do to justify myself that won't make him think still worse of me.

I haven't had five minutes alone with him in these three weeks—Elsie has seen to that. I am almost sure he regrets it. He often says how much he misses the long twilight talks we used to have. But if he makes any effort to return to the old order of things, there is Elsie to distract him and coax him away. Oh, I don't blame him—he tries to be loyal to me! But Elsie is so clever. She winds him around her finger and he doesn't suspect it. She began it the very moment they first met. And the cruelest part of it is that I—I—made it easy for her! He says he liked her then because—*because*, Mattie!—she looked so much like me. Do you understand?—she is climbing into his heart by the pathway I made! He loved me—he did love me—before she came! He—I must write about something else if I am to finish this letter.

You asked me about my gowns. They are coming on very well, what there are of them. I have decided to use three of my old ones, furbished up a little, for with all this unexpected expense on Elsie's account, I must economize where I can. She has to have four elaborate toilets complete from top to toe, and refused to have a single one of them "second-hand," as she calls it.

Oh, Mattie, how tired I am, how tired I am! It must be true that we have souls, for with only a mind and body no one could be so tired as I am. I am so tired I can't eat or sleep. The other day I went to a doctor and he gave me half a dozen different kinds of medicine, but said very solemnly that it was "imperative I should have absolute rest and freedom from worry

and excitement"! I almost laughed in his face. "Freedom from worry and excitement," when Monday night I go on trial for my life!

The bare thought of it sets me shaking now. What if I make a terrible failure, Mattie, what if I make a failure? Sometimes I think I shall. I am so cold and tired and old again, how can I ever play a happy, fearless young girl? If it were some wretched woman like myself— But all my courage, all my enthusiasm are gone. I think of Monday night as a whipped cur might think of another fight where he must win or be torn to pieces.

No, I don't! No, I don't! I'm not afraid! I know I can act, and I will prove it to MacDonald and Elsie and all the rest of them. I *will* succeed—I *will*!

I can't write any more. I'll try to send you a line after the performance.
ANNE.

VI

MONDAY NIGHT.

THE first performance is over. I will write you what happened, word for word. I want to. I want to see it in black and white.

I went to the theatre early. I was feeling very well. The doctor had given me something to quiet my nerves and brace me up. There were several boxes of flowers in my dressing-room—one from MacDonald, but with just his card inclosed—no letter. I had a maid to help me dress. My gowns looked much better than I had hoped. I began to feel very happy and sure of myself.

But I could not get my make-up on right. I put it on and took it off three times, but I could not get it right. My face looked to me like a painted mask. I could see all the bones underneath. At last I concluded it must be my imagination. Six months ago I was counted one of the pretty women of the stage, and surely I couldn't have changed so much in that time.

I was counting on seeing MacDonald for a few minutes before the curtain

rang up. I knew a word from him would do me more good than a drug-store of medicine. But "fifteen minutes" was called, and "overture" and "first act" before he came.

Then he was very nervous and in a great hurry to get out in front. He only stopped to shake hands and wish me good luck. But even that made the blood start running in my veins. After he was gone, I stood there and shut my eyes and prayed—prayed that for his sake I might succeed.

The curtain was up when I went out on the stage. Elmer, the stage-manager, was standing in my entrance. The house was packed, he said.

Presently Elsie came running up. I never saw any creature so lovely before; never, never. She was like a rose just blossomed. But the make-up had brought out the resemblance between us stronger than ever, and I needed no mirror to tell me how I looked beside her—I was the same rose plucked and worn and tossed aside. Oh, it was cruel, unnatural, unjust! Elmer stared first at her and then at me. "This is extraordinary! I don't know—I don't know—" he muttered, shaking his head.

She wanted me to see if she was properly gotten together. She was no more frightened or nervous than a kitten. "I'd have come up to see you before the piece began, but Mr. MacDonald has been down in my dressing-room for the last half-hour. I couldn't make him go away!" she said, and ran back to her own entrance.

A bare minute with me and a whole half-hour with her! Oh, if she had not told me! If I could have played that first act without knowing! But there was no time to think about it then. My cue was coming in a moment.

Elsie's first entrance was from the back. She was to come down a long flight of marble steps. My entrance came immediately after, and from the left.

I heard Elsie's cue. I saw her come running down the steps. Her arms were full of flowers and she looked like spring. There was a buzz of delight

from the audience. Then something went wrong—a cue spoken too soon, perhaps. The orchestra struck up the music for my entrance—*my* entrance, Mattie! The audience broke into a storm of welcome—for Elsie!

"My God, my God, they think it's you!" Elmer groaned. "They've killed your entrance!"

I knew that. I knew that very well. When my cue came, I was afraid to move. Elmer had to push me on. There was no music for me, no welcome. I—the star—Elfrida—I stood there trembling, voiceless, unrecognized!

Then somebody in the audience saw the mistake and began to applaud. Slowly, half-heartedly, others joined in. But it was too late. The enthusiasm had been exhausted.

Everything was black before me. I could not hear my cues. My own voice sounded muffled and strange to me. I spoke my lines without knowing what they meant. It seemed to me that I was dying!

But for the curtain's falling, I don't think I should have known when the act ended. I started off the stage at once, but someone came and took me back to receive the curtain call. There was only one. Then I went to my dressing-room. Healy and Elmer and MacDonald came and talked, but I don't know what they said. Elmer gave me some whisky.

Perhaps it was the whisky and perhaps it was MacDonald's face, white and wet with perspiration. At any rate, when I was dressed for the second act I was alive again. No, not really alive, but something near it. I could hardly wait for the second act to begin. I kept saying to myself, "I will show them! I will show them!" until my maid looked frightened and I laughed at her. I was still laughing when I went out on the stage, and I laughed as I made my entrance. I was not afraid any longer. I felt as if I were made of steel.

That act went better—or worse—I don't know which. All I know is that I played as I never played before, that the audience hung on my every

word, that they burst into applause time and time again when I did not expect it and that they gave me four curtain calls.

Yet at the end of the act MacDonald came hurrying up to me. "Good heavens, Miss Houghton!" he whispered—and his face was whiter than ever—"what are you thinking of? You are making Elfrida into a tragedy queen! Be quieter, gentler, sweeter." I looked straight at him and laughed—just laughed, and swept by into my dressing-room. I must have been a little crazy. I am almost sure I was a little crazy. He has not spoken to me since.

I played on as I had been playing. There was nothing else I could do. Whether it was very well or very ill, I don't know. Sometimes I think it was magnificent and sometimes I think it was ludicrous. It was one or the other—but which? It seems curious I should not know.

Elsie and I came home in a cab together. MacDonald had gone off to some Press Club supper. She talked incessantly. She told me all the compliments that had been showered on her—what Healy and Elmer and MacDonald said. She laughed about her reception in the first act and the mistake the audience made. She would not be quiet, though I told her I was ill. I put my fingers in my ears, but even then I could hear her. She is in her own room now, dreaming of her triumphs, no doubt; and I am in mine, with the door locked and bolted.

There! I've told you the whole story—the story of the great night when "Youth's Heritage" was produced and Anne Houghton realized her ambitions and became a star! That's done, as I promised. I've told you. Now, what next? What next?

I had meant as soon as I was alone to reason it all out calmly, to weigh results, to discover if I had really failed and where I failed, and how and why, to analyze my faults and find a remedy—but I cannot do it. My thoughts whirl round and round.

That hideous first act—it is all I can think of. I have lived it through a thousand times. It blots out everything else. I—

I can't write connectedly, Mattie. I put down a word or two and then walk up and down the room. There is something in me fighting and struggling like a wild animal, and it will not let me be still. It is very late, but I am waiting for the morning papers. They are to be brought me as soon as they come.

I cannot even guess what the critics will say about me. Will they damn me utterly; will they ignore me, or will they be kind? It is dreadful to wait like this. I know I failed pitifully, shamefully at first, but surely they could see the reason. Surely they will give me a second hearing, or at least make allowances; and if I did good work after that—ah, *if* I did, *if* I did! I don't know.

The papers are here. They came some time ago, but I have not read them yet. They are lying on the table in a pile, all limp and damp; just sheets of white paper with twenty-six sorts of little black marks scattered over them—and I have not the courage to touch them! How foolish I am! Perhaps they are full of good news for me!

I have read them. They are all alike—but one. They say, "miscast," "unsuited to the part," "undoubted emotional ability wrongly used," "not sufficiently young and fresh and appealing," "total and inexcusable misconception of the part." Each of them has his bullet for me—but one. He kills me slowly, to make people laugh. That is his business. He is a clown paid to turn vivisection into a roaring farce. "The spectacle of an old war-horse prancing about coltishly," he says. "A mournful relic from some museum of tenth-rate actors," he calls me. "Miss Wainwright is officially announced the sister of the so-called star, but there is a rumor that she is really the daughter," he goes on. "At any rate she is pretty, she can act, and she is of the

present generation; so pack the old lady back to the stock company whence she was unearthed, say I, and let Miss Elsie play Elfrida." I know that paragraph by heart.

Well, it's the end, Mattie. I see myself at last as others must have been seeing me all along—a silly, ignorant woman so befuddled with conceit that she fancied herself possessed of talent and ability, whereas it was only ambition and a petty, common sort of aptitude. If I could earn my living at anything else I would never play another part. As it is, I shall give up Elfrida at once. I shall send Healy my resignation tomorrow. Tomorrow! How am I ever to face people tomorrow—MacDonald and Elsie and all the rest? Everybody will know, everybody will have read these papers and sneered and chuckled over them—MacDonald will despise me—Elsie will cry prettily and pretend to console me, and all the time her eyes will be shining and her mouth trembling into a laugh! She made a hit to-night, you know, a very great hit. All the critics rave about her beauty and cleverness. Oh, how can I face them? I wish—I wish to God——!

Poor old Mattie! I hope you skipped those last lines, or read them quickly. They were arrant nonsense. I've got myself in hand again now. This is *not* the end! I won't send in my notice—I will keep on playing Elfrida till I bring those critics to their knees. One single night sha'n't make or mar my whole life. I'm not the first actress to be abused and ridiculed. There's not a famous man or woman in the entire history of the stage who has not suffered the same experience. I forgot that for a while. My nerves are overwrought tonight, and I can't seem to take anything calmly or reasonably. You see, I've been so sure that a brilliant success would bring MacDonald back to me again, and to feel everything slipping through my fingers at once——!

Now, thank heaven! I'm rational once more. I *know* I can play that part—I've done it time and time

again to MacDonald's satisfaction and delight—and tomorrow night I will play it better than I ever have before! I will explain to him how that first entrance of mine tonight upset me, that I was blind and crazy with the fear of complete failure, and I know he will understand and be patient with me. It's not as if I had spoiled the piece for him, you know. All the reviews were enthusiastic about it and predicted a long run. Of course, he will be disappointed at my bad notices, but in a week or two I can prove to him and everybody else how unjust they were. Oh, I'm not done for yet! I'm badly bruised but still in the fight—and in to win, to win! I feel it in every inch of me!

Tomorrow will be hard—meeting them all and discussing everything, but I'll set my teeth and get through it somehow. It can't kill me, however much it hurts.

I ought to go to bed this minute, but I'm too boiling over with energy to sleep. I've got out my part and shall study an hour or so. It's odd, isn't it, how after one performance we can see so many new points and shadings in a character? Tomorrow night there shall be a truer, better Elfrida than even MacDonald ever imagined! . . .

Elsie has been in here. She knocked and knocked at my door till I had to open it. But I hid the criticisms first.

She said that she had heard the boy bring me the papers and that she had come to read them. I told her she was mistaken, that they had not come. She insisted. I told her again they had not come. Do you think I could have stood by and watched her read those notices? Soon enough for her to read them tomorrow! Soon enough for her to begin pitying and patronizing me then!

She would not believe me. She kept peering around with her sharp eyes. If she had found them, I think I would have killed her before she could have touched them. It was very curious how I felt.

We stood and looked at each other a long, long time without speaking, and all at once I understood. I knew that I hated her, that I have been hating her all these weeks; and I knew that she knew it. I knew, too, that she hated me and that she had hated me from the very first. I cannot tell you how strange and terrible it was to be standing there looking into each other's eyes—mother and daughter—and both of us *knowing*. I was glad when she moved.

She pretended to yawn, and stretched her arms up over her head—they looked so round and pretty as the sleeves of her nightdress fell back. "If you won't show me your papers, I'll send downstairs for some of my own," she said. Then at the door she paused and added carelessly, still yawning, "MacDonald assured me I made the hit of the piece, and I'm to understudy Elfrida and play it whenever you want to lay off. Next season he is going to star me in a comedy he is writing now. He's desperately in love. He asked me tonight to marry him, and I suppose I may as well. Perhaps I shouldn't do any better if I waited."

She went out and I locked and bolted the door again.

I've been standing at the window ever since. It is almost daylight and the sky is beautiful. It is odd how little I care about MacDonald. I had one bad moment just at first, but that passed. I am too tired now to care about anything. After all, Mattie, nothing in the world really matters—nothing. We toil and fret and struggle—and in the end—

I am going to bed. I believe I shall sleep well tonight. My eyes are so heavy I can hardly see to finish this. Good night, dear old girl. Don't worry about me—I'll forget everything once

I am asleep, and tomorrow is a long way off.

A.

(A LETTER FROM MR. HENRY F. WARDNER, M.D., RECEIVED IN THE SAME MAIL)

NEW YORK CITY,
September 2, 1904.

MRS. MATTIE ENGLEHARDT.

MY DEAR MADAM:

I am taking the liberty of forwarding to you on my own responsibility the accompanying letter from Miss Houghton, which I found sealed and addressed on her desk this morning. I feel it would be useless and irreverent to pry into its contents, as there is no possible doubt of the cause of her death. Unquestionably it was heart failure, and brought on by excitement, overwork, and perhaps some great shock. When we forced open her door we found her kneeling quietly by a window, with no evidence of any pain or struggle about her.

As an old and dear friend of hers, you will doubtless be interested to hear of a little incident which occurred this afternoon. Mr. Eugene Willoughby, the eminent English actor, having, of course, heard nothing of her untimely death, called upon her in person to offer her an engagement in his London company and was deeply shocked and grieved when he learned the truth. He had seen her on the stage for the first time last night, and while he hinted that her work in that particular part was not entirely successful, he said he considered her the most promising tragic actress in America. "She would have made the greatest Lady Macbeth that London has had in years," he said.

With sincerest sympathy, I remain,

Very respectfully yours,

HENRY F. WARDNER.



"HOW did that budding genius of Griggs turn out?"
"He developed into a blooming nuisance."

MY LADY OF LAURELS

FOR her favor I essay
 Couplet, sonnet, virelay,
 Quaint ballade and kyrielle,
 Triolet and villanelle;
 Chant-royal, pantoum, quatrain;
 Spending hour on hour in vain.
 All return to me again.

Burning passion, dreams of gold,
 Subtle fancies find her cold.
 Neither smile nor word of cheer
 From her bids me persevere.
 Obdurate, this icy queen
 Sitteth on a height serene,
 Editing a magazine!

ALDIS DUNBAR.



JUST TO SATISFY HER

HEIRESS—I am afraid you love me merely for my money.
 COUNT—Ah, no; and when we are marreed I will prove to you by getting
 reed of eet as queekly as possible.



WITH FEW CREDENTIALS

“CLEVER woman, is she?”
 “You bet! She got into society without a thing except education
 and refinement.”



“I SEE that Gruet has a job as bill-collector.”
 “Well, he has a good collection of his own to start with.”

SCARLET LEAVES

By Johnson Morton

UPSTAIRS Aunt Keziah coughed dismally. The turning of a season was for any invalid, she declared, a critical time; and so, at the first touch of September, the sudden glow of a rosy leaf on the hillside, she had gone to her own room, closed both windows and given herself, unreservedly, to the care of her health, aided by a fire in the air-tight stove and frequent and substantial meals which her nephew's wife brought her on a tray.

Anna heard the cough as she put the finishing touches to the supper she had prepared in the kitchen below. It was followed by heavy footsteps. The door opened at the head of the stairs.

"Mrs. Bronson," a voice sounded with a touch of injury in it—Aunt Keziah had never brought herself to any familiarity with David's wife—"bring me some wood as soon as you can, please. You forgot it this morning."

Mahala Baxter, who stood at the sink, dropped the pump-handle and tossed her head. "I guess if she's able to walk across that bedroom she might as well stretch a point and reach into the wood-box in the front entry."

Anna flushed as she met the look of scorn in her neighbor's eyes—scorn for her meekness more than for the other's demands, she realized.

"Oh, Aunt Keziah is—Aunt Keziah," she laughed sparingly, as though unused to such expression. "Yes, in a moment. I'll bring your supper first."

She lifted the heavy tray, but put it down again. Mrs. Baxter had dried her hands on the roller-towel and stood waiting.

"Your money's right on that candlestick by the clock, Mahala. You've done a great deal this afternoon, and I thank you. Can you come over tomorrow about eleven and help me with the dinner? I'm expecting my husband back—if it's a fair day."

"Yes, I suppose so," the older woman grudged an assent. "I heard down at the store about David 'most as soon as you did, I guess. Cyrus stopped in there on his way up from the depot with your message. I can't come till half-past eleven, though; I've got to rub through my own work first. It keeps me on the jump some, this working out, but the money's welcome."

She sighed as she tied the twenty-five-cent piece in the corner of her apron and put her hand on the door.

"And would you mind, Mahala"—Anna's question was an appeal—"going home by the summer-house and untying Davie and bringing him here?"

Davie was in the kitchen when his mother came downstairs; a fat, uncouth child of ten with a mop of red hair, a drooping mouth and eyes back of which no fire burned—"God's Innocent" he would have been called in the kindly phrase of Italy; but the doctor who stood by at his birth and frowned at the shape of the baby head gave him a harsher name. With the years he grew rapidly in physical strength, but the poor brain never awoke; and at last, when he was eight years old, Anna uttered the thought that lay at her heart.

That was the year when her husband had given up the ministry and they had come with Aunt Keziah to live at the old village house that had been Anna's grandfather's.

"David," she said, with her hand on

her husband's arm, "I am not able to manage the baby any longer. He is too strong for me. His rages are terrible." Her voice shook. "I can't talk to him; he doesn't understand and I can control him only by force. David, I am really afraid of him sometimes, afraid of my own little boy. He has bitten me, he has kicked me and I can't leave him an instant out of my sight because he destroys anything within reach. So don't you think that we ought to send him away? They treat them so well at some of those good places, teach them and control them, and they are far, far happier. The money can be managed somehow, and I've been looking over——"

David Bronson freed his arm. "What are you talking about, Anna?" His pale eyes searched her through their glasses. "Send away my child, flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone, heritage of God! Send him away to an asylum! Nonsense. I am not surprised at you, Anna—your nature is fond of making compromises; but, thank heaven, mine is of sterner stuff and cannot. Because I have found myself, after long heart-searching, unfitted to preach the word of my Master as others wish to hear it, is no reason for my being unable to live my life on the consistent plane of my duty. Let me hear no more of this selfish plan. You are my unfortunate child's mother and it ought to be your pleasure to devote yourself to him—all the more so because God has ordained that he is not like other children. You have nothing else to do, Anna, literally nothing; and, I say it in all kindness, I blame you because you seem willing, for a mere whim, to shift your plain responsibility."

She saw his thin lips draw themselves into a line that closed all argument. She found herself trying vaguely to trace in the face before her the lines of scholarly asceticism that had somehow pleased her girlish fancy. She remembered the little woodcut of St. Francis that had suggested David; it had stood on her bureau for years; and sometimes when she was ready

for bed, she would take it up and wonder at the beauty of the face, while a little prayer in her heart cried out, "O God, make me worthy of my husband!" The picture she had torn in two long ago, and from the face of David Bronson all resemblance had faded. The lines had grown wrong; the insistence for an ideal had deepened into an obstinacy for an opinion; that look of renunciation, become self-conscious, was just a call for admiration; and what she had once thought was a fine aloofness from everything unworthy, seemed only cruelty.

She did not speak again. Silence is our best weapon when we care no more, and long since her husband had failed to arouse in her any emotion stronger than a mild surprise and a dull distaste. But she had striven with all the strength and passion of her nature to do her duty by the boy, even to develop that duty—now that it must be followed out in a way other than her own good judgment might approve—into something that approached enthusiasm. He should think through her. She would stand between him and the world. She would anticipate every wish of his, explain every lack. It must dawn, through her, this belated intelligence.

But it never did—every faint symptom faded as the big body grew sturdier.

And what of David Bronson? Why, he shut himself in his study for periods that grew constantly longer, working at his book, he said, until one day six months ago, going to call him to dinner, his wife found him quite unconscious in his chair—a slight lesion of the brain, it proved to be, and he had been sent to the new hospital at Wilton for treatment. The little household settled itself into even narrower lines, the servant was given up, and Anna had done the work single-handed with such slender aid as she could get from her neighbors, making the best of Aunt Keziah's limitless vagaries and struggling bravely with the strange development of the child, subtly conscious, all the while, in spite

of her added cares, of a new sense of life stirring at her heart, a fresh recognition of youth that somehow had come suddenly with the withdrawal of her husband's deadening presence.

The child looked up dully as she crossed the room. He was straining, red-faced, at the end of the piece of clothes-line which Mahala had taken the precaution to tie well out of reach of the table.

Anna went to him; this terrible rope distressed her whenever she saw it, necessary as it was.

"Davie dear," she said, kneeling on the floor beside him, "let mama take off the old harness now. See, the horse has come back to the barn!"

The boy's pendulous lips twitched eagerly, but, dog-like, he tugged the harder.

"Stand back a little, Davie boy, so that I can untie the knot."

She seized his stout waist; the child's hands found her hair, tore at the braids and the black masses fell about her shoulders. Davie cackled shrilly and clung to her wrists.

"Don't, don't, little boy," she begged, but his forehead puckered angrily as he bent back her slender hands with his strong ones.

She winced with the pain that brought a cry: "Davie, careful—you are hurting mama."

He touched his teeth to her flesh. A fear caught her heart and she called again, as a step beat the walk outside and a tall figure blocked the open door. It was a young man, flushed and hatless, his arms full of scarlet maple-boughs. His face clouded as he flung his burden to the floor and ran to her side. Davie's hands relaxed their hold when he saw the shining leaves.

"Pretty, pretty!" he screamed as he sprang upon them.

Anna recovered herself. "Davie is so excitable, Mr. Farnham. He likes to pull down my hair." She rolled the shining strands into place.

"I hope he hasn't hurt you." The man's tone was eager and she felt his eyes on the red lines across her wrists.

"Hurt me? No, indeed, he's only a baby!"

"Mrs. Bronson"—he hesitated and the sunny smile that she had come to know so well shone in his face—"I've got to say something to you—something that perhaps I've got no right to say, but I can't help it. You really must send that child away!"

Anna answered a little stiffly, "No, I don't think that you have a right to say that."

Farnham held his head on one side and smiled again. Then he went on with an insistence curiously at variance with his light manner—a characteristic that attracted attention and gave an air of importance to his smallest word. Anna recognized the tone and unconsciously yielded to its influence.

"But I'm going to *take* the right, just as you ought, by this time, to know I would. Anna—" She shook her head but her eyes smiled back at him. "Oh, I must call you by that name from this time on. After seeing you nearly every day for three months, I really think you should let me. But I *mean* what I said just now. It is not right, not even safe for you to keep that boy at home. You are doing quite wrong. I've noticed it, everybody notices it. He is really dangerous. Do forgive me for speaking so of your child. But it's true, Anna, and I can't bear it. It must be terrible; and it's just a waste of time and strength and youth—yes, and love, for you to sacrifice yourself like this."

A suggestion of ready tears stood in the young fellow's eyes. Anna's own were quite dry, and by his flushed face hers seemed pale.

"I'm sure you mean the very kindest and best things in the world, my friend, when you say that, but you don't know the situation. You've never seen David, you know—my husband—and he decided long ago that Davie must stay at home. I don't deny to you that it has been very hard. I'll go so far as to say that, perhaps, I should have planned differently, had I been alone; but the fact remains that we, my husband and I, made up

our minds that it was best to keep the boy with us. That's all there is to the story. It's a simple, domestic episode. Only, please, don't call wasted all the love and devotion that a mother gives, or tries to give, her poor little child."

His quick perception caught the note of disappointment in her voice and a rush of feeling made him take her hands.

"You poor little woman!"

There are times when the tone of a voice is mightier than argument, the sympathy of a presence more potent than will; when the intellectual pales before the physical. There are the tributes that the heart exacts from the mind; largesses that the divine in us throws eagerly to the human. To Farnham's touch, strong, tender, compelling, Anna's hands gave a sudden response. He might have spoken for hours and her woman's will, proud in its desolate dignity, would have hidden from him, veiled in her friendly frankness, all that it held secret almost from herself; but the answering pressure of her warm fingers brought a revelation absolute to him; to her half comprehended.

It needed but the touch of his face against her own to send the blood flaunting over cheek and brow, and then she understood! Her lips met his as she lay in a contentment of surrender against his breast.

Farnham spoke first; he lifted the little head and looked deeply into the eyes that, full of strange, new meaning, shone back at him.

"Dearest," he said, "oh, my best and dearest"—his voice deepened tenderly with every word—"how I love you! Has it really come to pass, this wonderful thing that I've dreamed of ever since I saw you—dreamed of and longed for, and yet tried with all my might to push away? Ah, dearest, I knew what might happen on that very first day when I was being driven from the station, for fate made me look out of the carriage window, and there you were! You had on a blue dress, and you were tying up some sprays of honeysuckle on the porch. I saw just

your back, just the blue back of you, but I loved your back, my darling. Then I thought of you constantly all through those long days while I was getting well. At first I lay upstairs on Nell's balcony and could hear only voices, yours and Nell's. Hers was just a voice, but yours—why, yours was a song! I'd toss and turn there and strain my ears for the music of it and shut my eyes and try to fancy a face for you—a face to match your voice, for I loved your voice, you see. Then came one golden day—I wonder if you remember it, too?—when Nell brought you to me and I saw your face, and my eyes fell before yours, for it was the face of the woman my soul adored."

His smile, light and whimsical, broke the tension of the moment that had wrapped them in its silences.

"And you've never given me a chance to say this, little saint, till just tonight. It was to be our last night, too! I meant to go away tomorrow. I'd really come to say good-bye, to tell myself that it was the end. The end? Oh, my love, my love, it's just the beginning!" He drew her arms to his shoulder and held her close.

On the floor, in the sudden reaction that follows intense nervous excitement, Davie had fallen asleep, a bunch of maple-leaves crushed in his hand against his cheek; but his mother was scarcely conscious of him. Before the flash of comprehension that illumined the moment, all else paled into the semblance of a mere suggestion.

She seemed to start afresh; to take up the threads of her life where she had dropped them long ago in her girlhood, in the days when she lived in a future woven of dreams. Now the future had come true; the dream that was best of all. She was loved and she loved in return. A call had awakened all the imagination of the girl, the potentiality of the woman; and to that call her very soul gave answer. It was he who called, he whose arms encircled her and whose heart beat against her own. Shyly she lifted her eyes to meet his and a sudden recognition of what had been the motive-

power of her life of late touched her brain; not the passive relief the other's absence had brought, but the active joy of this man's presence. Strange the thought that but an hour ago they had been just friends; and now he belonged to her and she to him, forever! Wonderful, the subtle consciousness that this was ordered and ordained from the beginning, though, search as she would, she found no starting-point. She, too, remembered the very first day they had met on the white-pillared upper balcony of her friend, Ellen Gordon's house, where Farnham was passing the weeks of his convalescence from a serious illness. It all came back to her. The two women had paused a moment at the long window, and Nell had given the scene a small dramatic touch as she pushed aside the green shutters.

"Cousin Randolph," she cried, "behold your after-cure. It's his curiosity about you"—she turned mischievously to Anna—"that has brought him up to the point where I dare give him the reality. I've used you ruthlessly, my dear, as bugaboo and reward alike, and I've surrounded you with more mystery than you can untangle yourself from in a decade." Then suddenly she had turned and left them.

And through a long afternoon hour—a respite so rare that it stood out in Anna's memory—they talked together with an ease that carried them well into the fields of friendship. It was to her door that Farnham's first walk led him when he had grown stronger, and, in the genial comfort of his nearness, she forgot her momentary dismay at the bareness of her rooms, her instant's resentment of Aunt Keziah's presence and her sudden fear that he might not understand Davie. He understood always; his sympathy met her every mood, tender or sustaining as her need might be. At his touch a thousand little fancies in her brain that she had thought withered had blossomed anew. She found herself once more alive to the appeal of the natural life about her; the morning songs of wood-birds, her garden's gay progression through

the August noons and the mysterious summer twilights, vocal with a thousand night sounds that hung between the sunset and the hills.

The sleeping child stirred uneasily, and the movement snatched his mother's thoughts back to the present as she freed herself from Farnham's arms. He yielded to the struggle of her hands against his breast and released her silently, suddenly grown conscious of some inward conflict that had just begun in the woman's mind. She drew back from him, her face crimson, her hands trembling.

"What have I done?" Her voice was a whisper. "What have I let you do? No!" she cried, as he held out his arms impulsively. "No, you must not touch me; you must not look at me. I must never see you again. Go, go! I am not a bad woman! I know what is right. I know what is my duty; but oh, I forgot—forgot! Did any other woman ever forget? I shall not forget again. See!" She held up her hand, on which a wedding-ring hung loosely. "I am David's wife, bound to him by this symbol, bound my body and my mind, and I must bind my heart, too. My heart! Oh, I've let you see into it, let you know the truth! What shall I do? But it's not all the truth. I am a good wife. I am a faithful wife. I shall keep my word—I promised, I made a vow—keep not only the letter but the spirit of it. You shall not think me a light woman."

She turned to the window; her shaking hands covered her eyes and she wept noiselessly.

The man's fine instinct held him where he stood and kept his voice calm. "You are the noblest woman I ever knew. If wrong has been done, it is I who have done it. I should not have spoken; but I have, Anna, and now you and I know the truth together, know that we love one another, know that we belong to one another, know that there is no escape from that truth which speaks to us with every breath. Anna, you know that I love you and I know that you love me."

She turned slowly toward him, pale and weary-eyed; her gaze was deep and searching.

"The truth! Yes, Randolph, this is its hour. I must not deceive even myself. I do love you; that is the shame of it, perhaps its glory, too—I love you—" Her voice lingered over the words and he came eagerly to her. "No," she held him back, "I say this not for you but for myself. You must leave me, Randolph. Go—please—go!"

He hesitated for a moment as he saw her tremble and clench her pale hands, but he followed the sign of her pleading eyes and closed the door behind him.

A belated summer storm broke over the mountain that night. Back of the throbbing monotone of chirping crickets rolled defiant murmurs of far-away thunder. Down the maple alleys fluttered premonitory winds and, by-and-bye, sharp-edged clouds, vivid with flame, encroached on the star-field. A chill dampened the night as the moon went out. A flash of nearer fire, an answering peal and a rush of two gales that met on high and hurried together down the bending hill-side, brought the rain.

Anna had stood long at her window staring into the darkness. She drew down the sash, fastened the heavy shutters tightly together and turned to the light that flared in the draught. She held it above her head as she looked down on the child asleep in the small barred bed that had been made for him. By his side lay a branch of maple-leaves from which he had refused to be separated when she brought him upstairs. Anna had put it on the outside of the bed. It stretched from pillow to footboard and caught the lamplight on its glittering red. Davie's face, with his eyes closed, looked strangely human, and a flash of the old hope came to his mother as she bent and kissed his cheek lightly.

She stood listening for a moment at Aunt Keziah's door; the old woman's ponderous breathing gave her

courage to enter. The heat of the embers still glowing in the stove almost stifled her. The room was in darkness, but a flash of lightning showed her that the figure on the bed lay in an uncomfortable position. She lifted the shoulders and freshened the pillow underneath the head, and Aunt Keziah wakened and stared at her an instant.

"Oh," she muttered, "I was having such a bad dream." Then with one of her unusual flashes of appreciation she added, "That's better, thank you; you are very kind to me," turned to the wall, sighed and was again asleep.

David's room came next. Her lamp disclosed its bareness and its trim order. It was in readiness for its owner's return next day—no, that day; already through the tumult of the storm Anna's ear caught a single discordant strike of the village clock. A small hard pillow lay at the top of the narrow iron bedstead; a painted bureau covered with a towel held a brush and comb and a stand for David's watch. A deal table with a green cloth stood against the wall; on it were neatly folded papers and freshly sharpened pencils. A deep-seated leather chair—relic of college days—sagged and worn, faced the fireplace, and on the walls hung some pale engravings in tarnished frames. Anna shuddered. The whole look of the room was so prepared, so expectant, that it brought to her more poignantly than ever before the significance of the present. It seemed to symbolize the barren years that lay before her, when age should add a burden to what youth found almost too much to bear.

She steadied herself an instant, leaning against the bookcase by the door. Books were David's passion and, as she brushed against the calf-bindings, she remembered how he would buy them even when they needed coal. It was inexplicable to her. Her hand touched a volume not quite in line with the rest. Mechanically she drew it out. It was a little copy of Amiel's Journal that David

had once given her. She had read it and then forgotten it, but he had carefully put it away on his shelves. It opened at random to a page marked in his cramped hand. Her eyes followed the lines and read:

"You must love with the same love, think with the same thought as someone else, if you are to escape solitude."

In the margin, as was his habit, David had put his initials; the small, faint letters seemed to her to appropriate the thought. Solitude! There was then a solitude other than her own, hemmed in by walls built by conscience and by habit, the strongest walls of all; a solitude embittered by an inability to adapt itself, to find that community of heart without which the clever brain realized that there was no escape. She replaced the book carefully and went downstairs.

The storm was dying in the east; already glints of pale moonlight came through the rents of the sky and the rain had ceased. The crickets droned again in the wet grass. Anna had thrown herself on the sofa in the sitting-room, and lay staring, wild-eyed, into the grateful darkness. She would face the plain duty before her, make the conquering of the long future her expiation.

"It may not be so hard, after all," she mused. "What if the baby should get well? He looked so like other children as he slept tonight. Stranger things have happened. Aunt Keziah was kind to me when I woke her; she was almost tender. Perhaps, if I try harder, she may come to like me. And David, poor David! I never realized that he might be lonely, too. I suppose he has been. I will try my best and it may not be so hard."

A sudden turn of her mind brought before her a picture: a man, thoughtful, tender, kind. His eyes looked into hers as he held open a gate. Beyond were fresh winds blowing and the path seemed fair, and outside were freedom and love.

Then the face of the child came again, distorted, angry, impotent,

hopeless; its only expression a savage need of her, its mother.

And David, her husband, needed her, as well!

"I can't bear it again," she cried in her heart. "My life is just a treadmill where I walk away my youth with no praise, no recognition, not even justice!"

"Randolph needs me, too; his need is different, but it's just as great, and I *want* to give things to him because I love him, and sometimes I hate David. How can it be right to hate a man who is your husband! I love Randolph Farnham! There, I've said it. I told it to him and I'm not ashamed of it. I am proud. But the poor little child—my own child—needs me and I love him, too. I promised to love David. I'll do my best. I am thirty-two years old, and many women die when they are young. But suppose I should live to be seventy! Forty years more! I can never bear it, unless I get used to it, and they say that old people do. I deserve to be punished like that. I am a wicked woman. I loved the feeling of Randolph's arms about me—and I promised David—I promised *myself*! Where is my moral sense? Poor David used to say that I always made concessions. Used? He'll say so tomorrow. Tomorrow? It's today. Oh, horrible! He's coming back today! My husband is coming back. Well, I'll meet him and I'll tell him everything. I'll not spare myself—I'll start clear. I'll promise all over again. I'll try to endure him. I'll make him happy in spite of himself. I know what is right and I know what duty is. I'll be a brave woman. Randolph Farnham will say that I'm brave. I love Randolph!"

A little prayer that she had used as a very small child rose to her lips. She breathed it, again and again, half unconsciously, through her sobs: "O God, bless me and make me a good girl."

Sometimes she slept and thought it all a dream; again she battled soul and brain, and the dawn found her wan and weary, but calm and on her knees.

Anna read Farnham's letter over again when she was alone once more. She had found it tucked under the outer door when she came into the kitchen to get breakfast. It was nearly one o'clock now, almost dinner-time. Aunt Keziah had descended from her chamber. She wore a stiff black dress in honor of her nephew's return. She rocked heavily in a creaking chair in the room beyond. Davie was in the summer-house, and Mahala Baxter had just left her with a backward glance of approval at the well-laden stove. At any moment her husband might come through the door; the creaking chair told off the seconds.

She held the paper out of the sunlight that streaked the yellow floor. These were the words she read:

I know what is in your mind because the same thoughts are in my own. Loving one another as we do there must always be a strong clairvoyance between us. You have struggled through the night; I have struggled too. I stood under your window outside the light that came from your lamp and fought with you the fight that you were making. Never fear: I shall not fight against you. I am going away today. I never mean to see you alone again, because I feel that you would have it so. To know is to be strong, and in the strength that is ours from the comprehension of one truth we shall both endure. I love you. I live for you. I wait your call. I stand always against your need. With the kernel of life in our hearts there is no death for our love. You have taught me to turn aside from the husks. I want to do one thing for you—half for you and half for myself. Don't think it strange of me. I want to bring your husband back to you. I know that you will allow this and I hope that you will understand what it means to me. Besides it will be better for him: my trap is

easier than a hired carriage. I shall drive myself and leave David at your door.

She read no further. Outside was a sound of hurrying feet; Mahala Baxter came breathless through the door. Her shawl hung from her shoulders, her face showed sodden and tear-stained, and she wrung her hands aimlessly.

"Something dreadful's happened, Mis' Bronson," she gasped. "Poor child, I can't tell you. There's been a runaway—Mr. Farnham's horses. 'Twas Davie did it. Oh, you poor girl—" she hesitated. Aunt Keziah still rocked noisily.

"Go on!" Anna's pale lips scarcely formed the words. "Davie?"

"He bit through the rope—oh, I'd ought to have used a better one—and he took that big branch of leaves that he sets such store by and he ran like mad down the bank to the church lot, and just then the team was comin' round by the store, and Davie he laughed and he waved the branch right in front of 'em, and the horses shied and bolted and the carriage was tipped over, and David and Mr. Farnham was both throwed out, and one of them ain't moved, but the other one was getting up when I come here. Oh, you poor child—you poor child!"

"Which one of them got up?" The voice was sharp and rang like steel.

Mahala waved her hands again. "Oh, I never stayed to see—poor child, poor child——"

Anna ran to the doorway just as David Bronson came around the corner of the house.



THE BEST EVER

"IS Maudie clever?"

"Clever? Why, that girl is clever enough to keep the men from knowing that she is clever."



Bertha Annie Palmer